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### A Doctrinal Training Program Adapted to the Current Chinese Setting

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ABSTRACT

A DOCTRINAL TRAINING PROGRAM ADAPTED TO  
THE CURRENT CHINESE SETTING

by

Robert C. K. Wong

Adviser: Jon L. Dybdahl

## **ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH**

### **Project Report**

**Andrews University**

**Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary**

**Title: A DOCTRINAL TRAINING PROGRAM ADAPTED TO THE  
CURRENT CHINESE SETTING**

**Name of researcher: Robert C. K. Wong**

**Name and degree of faculty adviser: Jon L. Dybdahl, Ph.D.**

**Date completed: December 1993**

China is a country with the largest population and second largest territory in the world. During the past millenniums she has not had a considerable Christian background, but was strongly influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. In addition, from 1949 to 1990, atheism and evolutionism have been rampant under the Communist regime. By God's grace and power, and through His faithful children's witness, the Chinese church (including the SDA church), though experiencing severe trials, has not only survived but thrived. Church membership has increased dramatically.

The future of 200,000 SDAs and the progress of the Three Angels' Messages in modern China obviously depends on one decisive factor--Does the Chinese SDA church have sufficient workers that are equipped to live out and teach the biblical truth?

We do not have even one SDA school or seminary. The government as well as the officially sanctioned church is not accepting any denominational efforts or missionary work in this so-called post-denominational period of mainland China.

The most urgent need facing this church is how to train its local church leaders and tens of thousands of lay workers to serve its members and finish the gospel work in China.

In light of these conditions, this paper presents the way I have discussed to use the mass media--shortwave radio broadcasts and printed materials--along with organized study groups in China to train leaders and lay workers with sound biblical doctrines contextualized in the Chinese cultural, political, and spiritual setting. This doctrinal training with its theme, The Way That Leads to True Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity, is justified by the Holy Scriptures as well as encouraged by Ellen G. White's writings. It fits in with the present Chinese setting. My observations and personal experience also confirm it.

It is hoped this program will prove to be one of the best ways to train our Chinese lay workers now and wisely prepare for the great evangelistic thrust in the near future of China.



Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A DOCTRINAL TRAINING PROGRAM ADAPTED TO  
THE CURRENT CHINESE SETTING

A Project Project  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
Robert C. K. Wong  
December 1993

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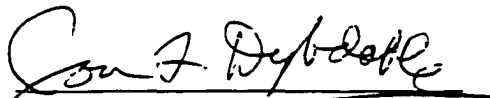
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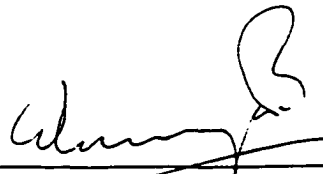
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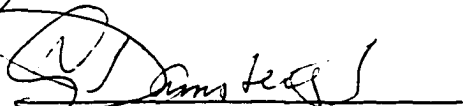
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AWR	Adventist World Radio
FEBC	Far Eastern Broadcasting Corporation
GCEAC	The General Conference Eastern Asia Committee
HKEAAC	Hong Kong Eastern Asia Administrative Committee
<u>IDB</u>	<u>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</u>
KJV	King James Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NIV	New International Version
N.T.	New Testament
O.T.	Old Testament
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
Three-Self	Self-governing, Self-supporting, Self-propagating
TSPM	Three-Self Patriotic Movement
TWR	Trans-World Radio
VOA	Voice of America

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When I look at this finished paper and the road I have travelled these last two and a half years at Andrews University, I have to thank God sincerely for His grace and guidance. I also deeply appreciate the financial support I have received from the GCEAC and the Chan Shun Foundation.

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My wife, Mary, who helped me complete my program by her loving sacrifice and gentle encouragement. My gratitude to her is deep.

My son, Wesley, whom I love, and hope one day will be able to serve His Maker in a significant way.

My brothers, Drs. John and Norman Wong, who expressed their concerns by many long-distance phone calls.

This project often aroused my ardent desire to serve the people of China.  
May God richly bless the unsaved billions in my native land.



## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to develop a doctrinal training program for Christians through mass media and study groups, especially for local Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) leaders and lay workers<sup>1</sup> in mainland China.

### Rationale of the Project

Modern mainland China is a country with the world's largest population (estimated at 1,151,486,000 in 1991).<sup>2</sup> Since the demise of the former Soviet Union, China has become the second largest territory (3,696,100 square miles) in the world.<sup>3</sup> Only about 2 percent of the people are Christians. SDA membership is about 1 percent of the total Christian body.<sup>4</sup> The rest of the population are atheists, evolutionists, and traditional Confucianists, Buddhists, and Taoists. As a native-born

---

<sup>1</sup>Since 1958 no official Seventh-day Adventist church has existed even though there are Adventist congregations or groups in China.

<sup>2</sup>The World Almanac--1993, s.v. "The People's Republic of China."

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>In the current Chinese situation no completely reliable report is available. The size of the church membership which the official church provided was minimal, while evangelical institutes abroad often gave enlarged figures. According to my knowledge and experience, I prefer to take the golden mean. In fact, no one can count God's real people.

Chinese, I, among other Christians, must bear the burden to reach this vast unsaved multitude.

Since 1951, there has not been a single SDA church school or seminary in mainland China. Only about twenty SDA ordained ministers remain and their average age is over seventy.<sup>1</sup> Even though a few Adventist young people are studying in certain seminaries<sup>2</sup> which are governed by the officially sanctioned Three-Self church,<sup>3</sup> there is no way for our young people to learn about SDA beliefs in school. It appears that a training program is the most urgent need for the Chinese SDA church--her growth and survival depend on it. I am probably the first SDA minister from mainland China to have the privilege of taking the Doctor of Ministry program at Andrews University. This project has become my preoccupation as well as a small repayment for the spiritual debt I owe to my native people and church.

Presently the Three-Self church in China, which is backed by the government, still attempts to control all religious activities and bars all missionary work or missionaries from foreign countries.<sup>4</sup> In light of this situation, mass media

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<sup>1</sup>According to a name list provided by GCEAC. Also according to the report of committee of TSPM of Chinese Christian Church, there are only about 1,000 ordained ministers in the total Christian body of China. Shen De-Rong, "Unspeakable Gifts," Tian Feng, March 1992, 9. See p. 222.

<sup>2</sup>There are a total of 13 seminaries in China which include 1 national, 5 regional, and 7 provincial seminaries. During the last 6 years there were a little more than 1,000 graduates. Ibid., 9, 10. Less than 10 of these graduates are Adventists.

<sup>3</sup>Three-Self means self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating which is the name of the Chinese Protestant Church.

<sup>4</sup>See Bishop K. H. Ting's talk, China Notes (Spring/Summer 1990), 586.

and small study groups have become important channels to break through or bypass some of the obstacles in evangelizing China. The overseas Christian, especially the Chinese SDA, can also be involved in making a contribution to this ministry.

The last seven years of my ministry, which included radio broadcasting in Hong Kong, and the reports of the other radio broadcasting organizations, such as Far Eastern Broadcasting Cooperation (FEBC) and Trans-World Radio (TWR),<sup>1</sup> all point to the fact that such a program would be in great demand.<sup>2</sup>

Though we have a lay-training program on the air in China, which at its very beginning I had the privilege to develop and engage in, I feel there is room for improvement. For instance, we need to introduce our twenty-seven fundamental beliefs within the context of Chinese thinking, understanding, and the present Chinese setting.<sup>3</sup> Theology and doctrine need to be related to the people within their religious-cultural contexts. We must preserve the biblical truth while adapting the preaching and teaching to the given culture with its historical background as well as the current situation. This is what I mean in this paper by contextualization.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>The two largest Christian radio services which produce Chinese programs for China. FEBC started its work in 1949; TWR started its work in the 70s.

<sup>2</sup>Yiu Ying, "To Find the Audiences' Faith through Their Letters," Far East Broadcast, January-February 1992, 3-10.

<sup>3</sup>See John K. Fairbank, China: A New History (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 15. "Our libraries are littered with the pronouncements of writers who knew all about China but could not see how much they did not know."

<sup>4</sup>See The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts, ed. Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur (Taichung, Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1984), 7-13.

This doctrinal program is an attempt to help lay workers reach those who have lost their confidence in man-made "isms" and dogmas but who still have a rich cultural heritage and are in search of truth in a practical way.

This program is designed for current use as well as for future implementation. An updated Bible correspondence course could be developed by adjusting the format and rewriting the same basic material. Small groups for short-term lay training could be presently organized in China, using this material as a reference and guideline to provide lay workers with a solid biblical and denominational foundation.

It is hoped the doors in China will open soon as they have in the former Soviet Union and Eastern European Communist countries. In planning for that momentous day we must now prepare a series of training courses.

#### Delimitations of the Project

Due to the scope of the D.Min. project, this paper only deals with a single course of the lay-training program, namely, the doctrinal course which can be considered as very basic. However, only the essentials of the fundamental biblical beliefs are presented in English, because the completed material for this course will be written in Chinese for practical usage in China.

The mass media addressed in this research is limited to the radio broadcasts of the Adventist World Radio/Asia Station (AWR) in Guam (however, our SDA

program recently was able to beam into China from Siberia).<sup>1</sup> This discussion also touches on the importance of the publishing work which will later provide the literature needed for training, such as the course outlines, teacher's guides, small pamphlets, Bible correspondence lessons, and syllabi.

Other forms of modern mass media such as audio and video production, computer software, and the press are outside my scope because they are difficult to be adapted to the current situation of the Chinese Church.

Recently, in view of the urgent need for more and better preachers, training classes were conducted by Three-Self churches in many places of China,<sup>2</sup> and also through some semi-overt study groups among Adventists.<sup>3</sup> (More of these groups will be formed as China opens its doors to religion.) The teacher him/herself usually has no systematic ministerial education or formal training, and has no printed materials to pass out. This project only serves as a prototype or experiment for short-term and long-term lay-training classes, providing a portion of the teaching materials for the benefit of both the trainers and trainees.

Even though ancient Chinese history, philosophy, and religions are mentioned briefly as a background to this study, this paper is limited mainly to modern China, especially since 1949 when Communism took over mainland China. For this

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<sup>1</sup>"AWR Highlights," Trans-Missions, May 1992, 1.

<sup>2</sup>"News of Training Classes," Tian Feng, November 1992, 30.

<sup>3</sup>Eugene Hsu, "Positive Signs On the Horizon," Intouchina, January 1993, 3. This newsletter published quarterly by the Eastern Asia Committee of the General Conference of SDA says: "A lay preacher training seminar was held in Hefei, Anhui province on October 24-November 7 with about 20 individuals attending."

reason, the geographical area targeted is mainland China and does not include other areas where Chinese people live. This paper is targeted to SDAs and other Christian bodies in China.

This project serves and works under the current situation in China and the so-called post-denominational period of the Chinese church. It is expected that there are many difficult conditions which will be encountered.

In addition, not many Chinese books or periodicals are available, thus the bibliography is limited.

### Description of the Project

According to the requirements of the D.Min. Project (II), this project report, after the general introduction, consists of two divisions: a theological paper and a practical study.

Part I contains three chapters. The first chapter surveys the literature on (1) contextualized theology and cross-cultural ministry, (2) non-Christian religions in China and the Protestant church, especially the SDA situation, (3) Christian usage of mass media, and (4) doctrinal training. The second chapter establishes the biblical foundation and understanding of this project from the Old and New Testaments and Ellen G. White's writings. The third chapter, after discussing the disadvantages of some conventional themes of the Bible, presents reasons for adopting the proposed motif "The Way That Leads to True Happiness, Wealth, and Longivity."

Part I attempts to confirm that: (1) doctrinal study from the Bible is important in the current situation in China, (2) the indigenous expression of SDA faith

is essential for and effective with Chinese people, (3) mass media is important to carry out the Great Commission, and (4) the lay training ministry in China with a format of seminar or study group is urgent and feasible.

Part II of this paper relates to the practical. It deals with SDA fundamental beliefs by using the theme "The Way That Leads to True Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity."<sup>1</sup> It is introduced in the light of biblical truth, Chinese ancient philosophy, traditional ethics, and popular religious concepts aided by modern psychological, anthropological, sociological, and political insights.<sup>2</sup>

Part II has four chapters. Following the three chapters of Part I, chapter 4 shows the relationship between basic Bible doctrines and the proposed theme. Chapter 5 gives examples of people and God's law as a part of the doctrine of Christian living. Chapter 6 provides examples on the doctrine of stewardship of money. These two topics are considered very important in current China and the Chinese church. Chapter 7 gives a summary and presents recommendations for implementation.

The writer of this paper feels keenly that without the help and illumination of the Holy Spirit and His guidance, it would be impossible to lift up Jesus Christ

---

<sup>1</sup>See Franklin J. Woo, "Seed Thoughts on Religious Tradition and 'Modernity'," China Notes, Autumn, 1991, 658. "For generations the pursuits of wealth, health and longevity seemed to be the major preoccupation of the majority of Chinese."

<sup>2</sup>See Luiz R. Alves, "Tradition, Modernity and Democratization," Media Development, February 1992. He said: "We must remember that cultures rich in different racial backgrounds, as many in the Third World are, have enough cultural values and memory bases to enable them to advance into modernity without losing fundamental aspects of their own image." This is true for Christianity as a religion too.

before the millions of unreached Chinese people and to inspire many dedicated lay workers to complete God's work in China. For this, in humility of spirit, the writer solicits the wisdom of God, His divine grace, and ever-abiding presence.



**PART I. FOUNDATIONS: CHALLENGE FOR  
INTRODUCING AN SDA DOCTRINAL  
TRAINING PROGRAM**

## CHAPTER ONE

### SURVEY OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, first a survey is done on the SDA doctrines and current Christian theology of Asia and China because this project is concerned with presenting Christian doctrines in a Chinese setting. Then a survey is made regarding Chinese religions and the Christian church, especially the SDA church. Before one can properly introduce SDA doctrine in China, one must be aware of its traditional religions, current thoughts, and the real situation of the Chinese church. The third part is a review of literature on Christian radio ministry because this program may also use modern mass media--specifically radio broadcasts--as a channel to carry these messages. There are still some who do not see radio ministry as an important way to evangelize China in its current given situation. Lastly, the urgency and value of lay doctrinal training in China is mentioned.

This survey of literature is not intended to be exhaustive since this is selective research and serves only as a basic background to my study and project.

## On Contextualized Theology or Doctrine

### SDA Materials

The SDA church is a worldwide organization. Most of its denominational books on doctrine or theology are in English and published in the United States.

Several important books in English such as T. H. Jemison's Christian Beliefs (1959)<sup>1</sup> have been used for many years in SDA schools. The structure of Jemison's book generally follows the common arrangement of doctrinal books which starts with the doctrine of revelation, then gives the doctrines of God, man, Christ, Christian life, church, and last-day events. Since such an arrangement is from an Adventist perspective, subjects such as the state of the dead, sanctuary, spirit of prophecy, Sabbath, and Christ's second coming are emphasized. Because it was written as a textbook, every chapter provides a well-prepared section on topics for study and discussion.

A recent book is Richard Rice's The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective (1985).<sup>2</sup> It suggests a motif, "The Reign of God," that is related to the traditional sequence of doctrine, with an exception--the last chapter deals with the doctrine of the Sabbath.

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<sup>1</sup>T. Housel Jemison, Christian Beliefs (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1959). This has been used as a textbook for many years in SDA seminaries and colleges.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Rice, The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1985).

A more recent book is Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .<sup>1</sup> (1988). It explains the twenty-seven fundamental beliefs which were voted in 1980 at the 51st Session of the SDA Church in Dallas, Texas. It attempts to be Christ-centered. The target readers of this book include other Christian bodies and ministers. It is a well-written book and has been widely distributed.<sup>2</sup>

Another more widely circulated but old book on doctrine is Bible Readings for the Home<sup>3</sup>--a study of three hundred vital Scripture topics in question-and-answer form.

Besides these prominent works there are some others such as W. H. Branson's Drama of Ages (1950),<sup>4</sup> A. E. Lickey's God Speaks to Modern Man (1952),<sup>5</sup> Questions on Doctrine (1957),<sup>6</sup> Jack Provonsa's God Is with Us

<sup>1</sup>Ministerial Association of General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . . (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988).

<sup>2</sup>This has been translated by J. Y. Deng into Chinese and published in the Chinese Church paper The Voice of Last-day Shepherd (Taipei, Taiwan: Signs of Times Publishing House), 1992.

<sup>3</sup>Bible Readings for the Home, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1963).

<sup>4</sup>William Henry Branson, Drama of the Ages (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1950). At one time the author was president of the China Division before the Communists took over China in 1949. Later he became General Conference president of the SDA church.

<sup>5</sup>Arthur E. Lickey, God Speaks to Modern Man (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1952). Many changes have taken place in China since its publication more than 40 years ago.

<sup>6</sup>It was prepared by the SDA church to answer questions on doctrine concerning some specific SDA beliefs.

(1974),<sup>1</sup> Charles Scriven's The Demons Have Had It (1976),<sup>2</sup> and Herbert Douglas' Faith: Saying Yes to God (1978).<sup>3</sup> Also Ellen G. White has written fine articles on doctrine.<sup>4</sup> All these works introduce the doctrine from different angles.

### SDA Materials in Chinese

The SDA church has published only a few books in Chinese. One is Outlines of Bible Doctrines (1932)<sup>5</sup> which took the question-and-answer form; another is Bible Doctrines (1951).<sup>6</sup> The Hong Kong SDA College and the Taiwan SDA College have used it as a textbook for many years. It follows the common doctrinal sequence and was written systematically. Besides these, David Lin prepared a set of Bible correspondence courses on SDA fundamental beliefs at the end of the 1940s.

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<sup>1</sup>Jack W. Provonsha, God Is with Us (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1974).

<sup>2</sup>Charles Scriven, The Demons Have Had It: A Theological ABC (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1976).

<sup>3</sup>Herbert E. Douglass, Faith: Saying Yes to God (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1978).

<sup>4</sup>Ellen G White, Steps to Christ (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1956), 105-113; idem, Counsels to Writers and Editors (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1946), 33-51; idem, The Ministry of Healing (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), 409-466; idem, Christ's Object Lessons (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1941), 333-335; idem, Testimonies for the Church, (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 5:580-86.

<sup>5</sup>Outlines of Bible Doctrines (Shanghai: Signs of the Times Publishing House, 1932).

<sup>6</sup>Bible Doctrines, due to the situation of mainland China, was printed in Hong Kong by the SDA church in 1951.

All these books and materials presented SDA doctrines in traditional ways. Recently, Paul H. K. Luo provided a manuscript Outlines of Doctrine Studies (1990-91)<sup>1</sup> in which consideration is given to effectively introduce SDA doctrines to non-SDA Christians in China. In addition, Ellen G. White's compilation The Faith I Live By has been translated into Chinese.<sup>2</sup>

### Theology of the Third World and Asia

Gerald H. Anderson edited Asian Voices in Christian theology, published in 1976, that covered many Asian countries. Unfortunately, mainland China was omitted from this study.<sup>3</sup> Robert M. Brown's Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with the Third World Eyes<sup>4</sup> appeared in 1984. It called attention to different cultural aspects. The same year Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur edited The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts.<sup>5</sup> This was a collective work which presented an evangelical perspective on contextualization and the necessity for contextualizing the Bible in

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<sup>1</sup>Paul H. K. Luo, "Outlines of Doctrine Studies," photocopied. Prepared by HKEAC, 1990-91. It was used as a gift to our *Good News For Asia* broadcast audiences.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, The Faith I Live By, 2nd Chinese ed. (Taipei, Taiwan: Signs of the Times Publishing Association, 1989).

<sup>3</sup>Asian Voices in Christian Theology, ed. G. H. Anderson (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1976).

<sup>4</sup>Robert M. Brown, Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with the Third World Eyes (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).

<sup>5</sup>The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts, ed. Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur (Taichung, Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1984).

Asia; it also made suggestions for Christian theology in the different Asian religious contexts. Daniel J. Adams published his book Cross Cultural Theology<sup>1</sup> in 1987. William A. Dyrness published his Learning about Theology from the Third World<sup>2</sup> in 1990. This was written to introduce Western Christians and theologians to the discussions about theology taking place in the Third World. The author gives a major overview of the theology of Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The last section--Asian theology--was most interesting and useful for this study.

In SDA circles, the works relating to Asia and contextualization are Jonathan Foo's project report<sup>3</sup> written at the Fuller Theological Seminary and K. T. Ng's dissertation<sup>4</sup> at Andrews University. Regretfully they did not discuss the theology of modern mainland China because they were born and grew up outside of China. Ng did present the traditional Chinese worldview and pointed out that under the impact of modernization and secularization, some characteristics have changed, and others, such as particularity, harmony, and practicality, have been retained.

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel J. Adams, Cross Cultural Theology (Atlanta, Ga.: John Knox Press, 1987).

<sup>2</sup>William A. Dyrness, Learning about Theology from the Third World (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990).

<sup>3</sup>Jonathan A. M. Foo, "An Inquiry Towards an Effective Strategy for Evangelistic Endeavors among the Southeast Asian Chinese" (D.Min. project, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1984).

<sup>4</sup>Gan-Theow Ng, "Religion, Culture, and Modernity: Some Missiological Implications of the Process of Secularization in East Asia (China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1991).

On Chinese Theology

David G. Geizer

David G. Geizer wrote an article on "T. C. Chao: Pioneer Chinese Contextual Theologian."<sup>1</sup> Chao was a famous Chinese theologian and one of the leaders of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Chinese church. He adapted for ancient Christianity Chinese philosophy and thoughts.

Wing-Hung Lam

Wing-Hung Lam published his dissertation at Princeton University in book form, Chinese Theology in Construction.<sup>2</sup> This is one of the first efforts to give a synthetic study on the second and third decades of the twentieth century on where the Chinese church stood within the anti-Christian movement. It is an apologetic as well as theological work. It inspires thought and is useful for reference in the current situation.

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<sup>1</sup>David G. Geizer, "T. C. Chao: Pioneer Chinese Contextual Theologian," China Notes, Autumn and Winter 1982-83, 232.

<sup>2</sup>Wing-Hung Lam, Chinese Theology in Construction (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1983).



Lee-Ming Ng

Lee-Ming Ng fills in the gap between 1920-50 with his article "The Promise and Limitation of Chinese Protestant Theologians, 1920-50."<sup>1</sup> The author mentions that Chinese theologians from 1920-50 were concerned primarily with indigenization and national reconstruction. They might be considered as successful in terms of indigenization, but were facing many new, unsettled problems. However, their efforts represent a genuine form of indigenization. Needless to say, handling contextualization of biblical doctrine for China is an unshirkable duty of Chinese Christians and theologians.

Yi-fan Shen

Yi-fan Shen wrote an article on "Chinese Christianity in Theological Reflections."<sup>2</sup> This essay summarized changes and presented new insights into the theological thinking of the official Chinese church since 1949. After the "Cultural Revolution" (1966-78), Shen believed that the revitalization that took place, especially in the recent years, could be characterized as more doctrinal than exegetical, more Christological than ethical tendencies. It also touched on culture, contextualization, and theology in the light of Chinese church history. Among these statements the author justified the Three-Self movement in the Chinese church.

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<sup>1</sup>Lee-Ming Ng, "The Promise and Limitation of Chinese Protestant Theologians, 1920-50," Ching Feng: Quarterly Notes on Christianity and Chinese Religions and Culture [English ed.] 21, no. 4 (1978): 175-182.

<sup>2</sup>Yi-fan Shen, "Chinese Christianity in Theological Reflections," Missiology: An International Review 13 (July 1985): 275-282.

K. H. Ting

K. H. Ting's "The Chinese Christian's Approach to the Bible"<sup>1</sup> is meaningful not only because the author is the top leader of the Three-Self church and the president of the largest seminary of China--Nanjing Theological Seminary, but also because his article reflects the situation that followed the chaotic age, and how and why Chinese Christians appreciate the Bible and certain topics.

In this article, Ting first points out some historical and theological facts that greatly conditioned the Chinese Christian's approach to the Bible. His points are:

1. China is the homeland of Confucius. Even though religion is not an important issue in society, it is tolerated by all kinds of people. However, the last forty years were somewhat different under the official ideology--Communism.
2. China was a mission field. The predominant church is evangelical and fundamentalist.
3. Once the Chinese church isolated herself from other churches of the world, mutual misunderstanding resulted and caused the Chinese church to become weak in theology and missiology.
4. The Chinese church has entered the post-denominational period. It keeps unity between the various churches but also curtails to some extent theological creativity and ecclesiological pioneering out of fear of upsetting that unity.

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<sup>1</sup>K. H. Ting, "The Chinese Christian's Approach to the Bible," China Notes, Spring and Summer 1991. The following information is gleaned from this publication, pp. 623-628.

5. After the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), public and official opinions have changed concerning religion. Instead of equating religion with opium as Marx asserted, officials believe China's current religion is compatible with socialism.

After this analysis Ting asserts that there are four groups of biblical passages which are greatly appreciated among Chinese Christians:

1. Passages which have to do with gratitude for deliverance and with finding "strength in weakness"--in the light of the terrible decade of turbulence (such as Matt 5:11-12; Ps 23; Isa 42:3; 2 Cor 4:8-11)

2. Passages concerning the understanding of the person of Christ (These have been a shift from Christ as only a moralist to Christ as the Christ of creation and the resurrection. The cosmic nature of Christ has been found [Col 1:13-20; Heb 1:3; John 1:9].)

3. Passages relating to love as God's supreme attribute (God's justice is not denied but it is a dimension of His love [John 3:16; 1 John 4:16; Matt 6:26-28; Hosea 11:4; Amos 5:24].)

4. Passages about the unity of Christians (1 Cor 1; John 17). Ting did acknowledge that this unity "is still in some ways fragile".

Ting also mentioned that Seventh-day Adventists "do not quite feel at home in the post-denominational existence they have nevertheless entered."<sup>1</sup> He himself takes a friendly position to SDA congregations. Surely due to his position and situation, his points are selective and leave out some factors. For instance, he does

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 628.

not mention that (1) people now are more aware of the perilous results of a man-made god or a cult of the individual, (2) people admire the freedom of choice which God granted to human beings, and (3) Christians are looking for God's kingdom, Christ's second coming.

### Chinese Religions and the Christian Church

#### In General

Concerning research on Chinese traditional religion, James Leggy wrote a classic and authoritative book: The Religions of China.<sup>1</sup> Another good book, China's Religious Heritage, was written by Chinese scholar Y. C. Yang.<sup>2</sup> This gives some insights into the different religions in China. Laurence G. Thompson's Chinese Religion: An Introduction<sup>3</sup> and Le'on Wieger's A History of the Religious Beliefs and Philosophical Opinions in China from the Beginning to the Present Time<sup>4</sup> are also useful.

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<sup>1</sup>James Legge, The Religions of China (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1881).

<sup>2</sup>Y. C. Yang, China's Religious Heritage (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943).

<sup>3</sup>Laurence G. Thompson, Chinese Religion: An Introduction, 3d ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1979).

<sup>4</sup>Le'on Wieger, A History of the Religious Beliefs and Philosophical Opinions in China from the Beginning to the Present Time, trans. E. C. Werner (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1969).

## On Christianity

Jonathan T'ien-en Chao, a Chinese researcher, provided A Bibliography of the History of Christianity in China: A Preliminary Draft.<sup>1</sup> A study on the current religious policy and practice, D. E. MacInnis's Religion in China: Policy and Practice (1989) is a good book and has ample documents and interviews.<sup>2</sup> P. Wickeri's Seeking the Common Ground<sup>3</sup> expresses good will to the Three-Self church in China. Francis P. Jones wrote a book on The Church in Communist China: A Protestant Appraisal.<sup>4</sup> Richard C. Bush, Jr., also published a book entitled Religion in Communist China.<sup>5</sup> Based on documents he objectively describes the tough religious situation in China. David H. Adeney's article "Church in China: Praise Amid Persecution" obviously looked at the Chinese church in its suffering but also discussed the strengthening process.

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<sup>1</sup>Jonathan T'ien-en Chao, A Bibliography of the History of Christianity in China: A Preliminary Draft (Waltham, Mass.: Faculty in Preparation, China Graduate School of Theology, 1970).

<sup>2</sup>Donald E. MacInnis, Religion in China: Policy and Practice (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1989).

<sup>3</sup>Philip L. Wickeri, Seeking the Common Ground (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1988). He was ordained by the Chinese Three-Self church in 1991.

<sup>4</sup>Francis P. Jones, The Church in Communist China: A Protestant Appraisal (New York: Friendship Press, 1962).

<sup>5</sup>Richard C. Bush, Jr, Religion in Communist China (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970).

## Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, which is close to mainland China, there are several publications such as Bridge and Ching Feng.<sup>1</sup> These are friendly towards China and the Three-Self church. China and Church<sup>2</sup> takes a critical position toward China and the Three-Self church. It also exposes some violations of religious freedom in China concerning the persecution of Christians.

## Mainland China

In mainland China itself, the Three-Self church's official paper is Tian Feng (periodical); another theological publication is Nanjing Theological Review. The government publications include Studies on World Religions (periodical) and Materials on World Religions (periodical),<sup>3</sup> which take the viewpoint of historical materialism in dealing with religion.

## United States

China Notes is a quarterly publication, an instrument of information and interpretation on matters of Christian concern relating to China.<sup>4</sup> It often provides good material, reports, and book reviews on China and the Chinese church. It seems

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<sup>1</sup>These are ecumenical publications published by the Lutheran Church.

<sup>2</sup>This is a monthly publication by the Chinese Church Research Center which is located in Shatin, Hong Kong.

<sup>3</sup>See Wangzhi Gao, "A Report: Christian Studies in the People's Republic of China," *Missiology: An International Review* 13 (July 1985): 363-367.

<sup>4</sup>China Notes is published by Church World Service & Witness in New York, USA. The editor is Franklin J. Woo.

to take a friendly attitude to the Three-Self church. Christianity Today sometimes publishes articles on the Chinese Christian church.

#### Adventist material

For Adventist material the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia provides some source material on the Chinese SDA church.<sup>1</sup> The official statistics were ended in 1951. During the fifties and sixties the Review and Herald published very few reports and articles on the Chinese SDA church. Since the end of the seventies, a few more news, articles, and reports have been found in the Adventist Review as China reopened its doors to the world.

During 1956-57, three important manuscripts were written by former leaders of the China Division. Copies of these manuscripts are available at the Heritage Center of the James White Library, Andrews University. One of these is David Lin's "An Appraisal of Administrative Policy and Practice in SDA Missions."<sup>2</sup> It addresses the weak points of mission and foreign missionaries--man-centered instead of God-centered, Western-controlled rather than Chinese governed. The other two papers were written by S. J. Lee, former treasurer of the China Division. The titles are "Reminiscences of Post-Liberation Days in China, 1951-57," and "Observations and

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<sup>1</sup>SDA Encyclopedia, 1966 ed., s.v. "China, People's Republic of."

<sup>2</sup>David Lin, "An Appraisal of Administrative Policy and Practice in SDA Missions." It was mailed by David Lin, the former secretary of the China Division to the General Conference. C. P. Sorensen dated it December 12, 1956. Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich.

Comments on the Work in China, Past and Present."<sup>1</sup> These articles provide good insights and lessons for us to study.

In addition, Ralph Neal's paper, "The Rain Descended and the Flood Came: A Survey of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Communist China," provides very thoughtful materials on the Chinese SDA church up to the early part of the 70s.<sup>2</sup> Robert Wong's manuscript, "All the Way My Savior Leads Me"<sup>3</sup> also gave some SDA church experiences during the 50s to the 70s. James H. Burry's paper "The Three Angels' Message to All of China"<sup>4</sup> discusses the China mission and gives some suggestions. Two newsletters--Intouchina and Voice of Hope--are published by the Eastern Asia Committee of General Conference (GCEAC) and its Hong Kong Office (HKEAC). These give quarterly reports on some SDA church work in mainland

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<sup>1</sup>S. J. Lee, Reminiscences of Post-Liberation Days in China, 1951-1957, TMS dated November 14, 1957; Observations and Comments on the Work in China, Past and Present, TMS dated December 8, 1957, Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich.

<sup>2</sup>Ralph Neal, "The Rain Descended and the Flood Came--A Survey of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Communist China," an unpublished paper for Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell's course in Denominational History.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Wong, "All the Way My Savior Leads Me," TMS dated 1983. Adventist Heritage Center, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich.

<sup>4</sup>James H. Burry, "The Three Angels' Message to All of China," a term paper for Bruce Bauer's mission class, SDA Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Mich., March, 1991.



China.<sup>1</sup> The organ of the SDA Chinese Church, The Voice of the Last-day Shepherd, occasionally has an article or report on the church in mainland China.

### On Mass Media--Radio Ministry

#### Christian and SDA Usage of Mass Media

"As early as 1924 the SDA church was using radio. By that year a 500-watt station had been set up in Berrien Springs, Michigan."<sup>2</sup> "By April of 1928, when radio had proved itself to be a valuable soul-winning agency,"<sup>3</sup> the Seventh-day Adventist church was in the forefront in radio ministry.

"On May 1, 1934, the General Conference Committee voted to encourage a more extensive use of the radio."<sup>4</sup> In April 1935, W. H. Branson mentioned "radio as one of the greatest single means of presenting Bible truth."<sup>5</sup>

In September 1936, H. M. S. Richards, Sr., was asked to work on a radio manual for use by all broadcasters. By October 1942, a General Conference (GC) committee recommended a wider use of the Bible correspondence course plan in

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<sup>1</sup>Before 1992, HKEAC's newsletter was Good News For Asia. I was the editor from 1986-90.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 rev. ed., s.v. "Communication Department."

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

connection with broadcasting. On October 22, 1948, the radio department of the GC was organized.<sup>1</sup>

In 1949, the largest Christian broadcast company in Asia--Far Eastern Broadcasting Corporation (FEBC)--started to beam programs to mainland China from the Philippines, just before the Communist Party took over China.

In the 1970s, another great Christian radio ministry serving China--Trans-World Radio (TWR)--set up its shortwave station in Guam.

Both FEBC and TWR offer a training program for layworkers and local pastors such as "Theology on the Air" and "Bible School for the Countryside."

#### SDA broadcasting in China

In 1934, F. E. Stafford and later Raymond H. Hartwell used station XMHA in Shanghai to preach the Adventist message every Sunday morning and received a good response.<sup>2</sup>

In 1946, the *Voice of Prophecy* broadcasts began in China, first on a station at Shanghai (November 10, 1946), and within one year on twelve other stations.

In 1950, after a temporary interruption in broadcasting caused by the revolution in China and the change in government on the mainland, the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>North America Radio Commission and the Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists, Broadcasting the Advent Message (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1944), 253.

*Voice of Prophecy* again went on the air in the Shanghai area, and the Bible Correspondence School reported more than 30,000 active students.<sup>1</sup> In 1951, it was terminated again by the government.

In the late 1970s, a Cantonese program was broadcast from Hong Kong and, later, a Mandarin program was beamed from Macao, which reached a small portion of people in the Guangdong Province.

In March 1987, the Adventist World Radio/Asia set up a powerful shortwave station in Guam. The Mandarin programs, as well as some local dialect programs produced in Hong Kong under the Eastern Asia Administrative Committee, were once again on the air. The *Good News for Asia* program reaches all of China and other Chinese in different overseas countries. By God's grace the weekly 120 hours' broadcast time have received a good response. Over 10,000 letters per year were received from China during 1988-90. Hundreds of people from mainland China enrolled in the Bible Correspondence School.

In China there is one radio set per 9.1 persons.<sup>2</sup> Almost half of the radios have shortwave capabilities. In Media Development, the article "It's Time to Tune in to Radio" says that "the most positive results in the area of communication and development over the past thirty years is the rural radio form. Sometimes it includes

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<sup>1</sup>SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 rev. ed., s.v. "The People's Republic of China," 239.

<sup>2</sup>The World Almanac 1993, 742.

collective listening."<sup>1</sup> Listeners' response from *Good News for Asia* has proved this point.

One of the SDA radio ministry pioneers, J. O. Iversen, says:

For centuries, transportation and communication made but little headway. . . . God designed that in this explosion of communications knowledge His objectives might be achieved. . . . God has placed the tools of radio and television within the grasp of His church to communicate His last warning message of hope and help to a faltering world<sup>2</sup>

"One of the greatest messages of the gospel to China is the message of hope. Hope can change a nation."<sup>3</sup> Interesting enough, in 1992 the *Good News for Asia* changed its call sign to *The Voice of Hope*.

Mrs. Ruth Graham, wife of Dr. Billy Graham, after her and her husband's official visit to China in 1989, said that the only way to spread the Good News to China today is by using the broadcast mode. Dr. Philip Deng, dean of the China Theological Graduate School in Hong Kong and translator for Billy Graham on that trip, said in Los Angeles that the best way for outsiders to preach the gospel to the Chinese in mainland China is by broadcast ministry.

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<sup>1</sup>"It's Time to Tune in to Radio," Media and Development, 4/1990, 1.

<sup>2</sup>J. Orville Iversen, So You're Going on the Air (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1969), 17.

<sup>3</sup>David Aikman, "The Future of China: Communism or Christianity?" Religious Broadcasting, February 1992, 46.

Recently, the Adventist broadcasters attended the *Voice of America's* fiftieth anniversary convention. They reported: "The convention concluded that shortwave broadcast will continue to be a cost effective method of communication to the world."<sup>1</sup>

### General Resources on Radio Ministry

In World Directory of Religious Radio and Television Broadcasting<sup>2</sup> there is a chapter entitled "Overview of Asia" that was published in 1973, which now seems very outdated. One can find materials in some inter-denominational journals such as Religious Broadcast and Media Development, but they rarely discuss China and the Chinese church. Some articles are helpful. William L. Hendricks' "The Theology of the Electronic Church,"<sup>3</sup> Robert H. Bowman's "Evangelism through Radio,"(1984),<sup>4</sup> Pamela L. Hays' "Radio and Renewal: Building the Church in China,"<sup>5</sup> and Dennis N. Voskuil's "The Power of the Air: Evangelicals and the Rise of Religious

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<sup>1</sup>"Adventist Broadcasters Attend VOA Convention," Adventist World Recorder, January 1993 (Adventist World Radio Programme Department).

<sup>2</sup>World Directory of Religious Radio and Television Broadcasting, comp. International Christian Broadcasters (South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1973).

<sup>3</sup>William L. Hendricks, "The Theology of the Electronic Church" Review and Expositor (A Baptist Theological Journal) 81 (Winter 1984): 59-75.

<sup>4</sup>Robert H. Bowman, "Evangelism through Radio," The Work of an Evangelist (1984): 847-852.

<sup>5</sup>Pamela L. Hays, "Radio and Renewal: Building the Church in China," Quarterly Journal of Christian Thought and Opinion (1986): 10-15.

Broadcasting"<sup>1</sup> all emphasize the worldwide radio ministry as well as appreciate the local gospel broadcast.

There is another old but good book by Clarence W. Jones, Radio: The New Missionary. The author tells his own experience and insight into radio ministry.<sup>2</sup> Dorothy Jane Rensch's thesis, "A Study of Some of the Problems in Missionary Broadcasting," mentions the history of station XMHD in Shanghai during the end of the 40s.

### Adventist Materials

Besides the material mentioned above, an old but meaningful book--Broadcasting the Advent Message--includes a short chapter under foreign-language broadcast, "Radio Work in Shanghai and Manila," by Raymond H. Hartwell. It provides some of the earliest history of radio ministry in China.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dennis N. Voskuil, "The Power of the Air: Evangelicals and the Rise of Religious Broadcasting," American Evangelicals and the Mass Media (1990): 69-75.

<sup>2</sup>Clarence W. Jones, Radio: The New Missionary, rev. ed. (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1949).

<sup>3</sup>North America Radio Commission and Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists, Broadcasting the Advent Message (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1944).

There are some dissertations by Chase, Jacobsen, and Sackey<sup>1</sup> which deal with SDA radio ministry. Unfortunately they do not say anything about China. In 1961 Chase also presented a very fine set of mimeographed instructions entitled "Ten Tips on Talking to the Air."<sup>2</sup> Arthur S. Maxwell wrote an article "Religion by Radio."<sup>3</sup> Ministry reported an interview with Tulio R. Haylock, associate director of the General Conference Communication Department, talking about SDA radio ministry.<sup>4</sup> Robert Wong gave a report (1989) on a meeting called by the GCEAC of the SDA Church in Loma Linda University, California.<sup>5</sup> It reported on the SDA radio ministry to China through AWR/Asia and local radio stations. AWR Mission, newsletter of Adventist Worldwide Radio, also reports monthly on its service.

#### Publications in Chinese

Only a few publications in Chinese were found, such as HKEAC's quarterly newsletter Voice of Hope (before 1992 it was the Good News for Asia

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<sup>1</sup>James D. Chase, Radio Spot Evangelism: The Development of a Research-based Radio Spot Series for Nominal and Non-Christians (1977); Terji Jacobsen, A Proposed Strategy for a Seventh-day Adventist Ministry on Community Radio in Norway (1985); Ebenezer O. Sackey, An Approach to Seventh-day Adventists Radio Evangelism in Ghana (1990). All these project reports can be found in the James White Library, Andrews University.

<sup>2</sup>James D. Chase, Ten Tips on Talking to the Air: A Manual for Gospel Broadcasters (Washington, D.C.: General Conference Radio-TV Department, 1961).

<sup>3</sup>Arthur S. Maxwell, "Religion by Radio," Signs of the Times, 18 January 1955, 4.

<sup>4</sup>"Interview with Tulio R. Haylock," Ministry, March 1988, 18.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Wong, "EAAC Program Department Report," February 9, 1989, See p. 221.

bimonthly publication). The Voice of Last-Day Shepherd published some articles on radio ministry.<sup>1</sup> The monthly pamphlet Far East is published in Hong Kong by FEBC. Also Trans-World Radio provides their newsletter on radio ministry.

### Doctrinal Training Program

When training the lay worker either by radio broadcast or through a study group, church doctrine must be emphasized.

Robert S. Folkenberg, president of the General Conference of the SDA Church, wrote recently:

Doctrine has been important to Adventists from the beginning, and it still is. The Second Coming, the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the three angels' messages, the state of the dead--these are the pillars of our faith. And the 27 fundamental beliefs unite us in doctrine worldwide.<sup>2</sup>

In view of his work experience in former Russia and Eastern European countries, Mark Finley said:

What should we expect next? I am not a prophet, but I read prophecy. We should expect China to open in the very near future. If we are wise, we should prepare literature right now for China, and prepare people who understand the language to be able to move quickly.<sup>3</sup>

David Lin, former secretary of the China Division of the SDA Church and current senior pastor of Shanghai SDA assembly, was interviewed at the 5th Session

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<sup>1</sup>See Voice of Last-Day Shepherd, Chinese ed. (Taipei, Taiwan: Signs of the Times Publishing House, June 1991), 8-13.

<sup>2</sup>Robert S. Folkenberg, "One People, One Lord," Adventist Review, February 4, 1993, 15.

<sup>3</sup>Mark Finley, "How Near Is Near?" Adventists Affirm, 6, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 22.



of the National Committee of Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China. He was asked: "What is your greatest concern for your church?" David Lin simply said: "The problem of training successors for the cause of God."<sup>1</sup>

The report of the standing committee of that session also says:

Our church membership is continually increasing, while our ministerial workers are very scarce. It has already formed a sharp contradiction. There are only about 1,000 ordained ministers in a more than 5-million member church. It seems that rate is too low. In order to build up the Chinese church nicely, train and bring up successors and cultivate the new generation of Chinese ministers and laity who love their country and church demands immediate attention.<sup>2</sup>

The official leader of the Chinese church, Bishop K. H. Ting, also admitted: "Because of the aging leadership of the Chinese church, the need for trained younger workers was desperate."<sup>3</sup> Almost every issue of Tian Feng reported on lay-training classes or seminars being conducted in different provinces and areas of China by the Three-Self church.

From my conversations with different individuals who have just left China for the States, unanimously they recognized that among money, preachers, church buildings, and religious books, preachers are in the greatest demand. Obviously, the urgent need for the Chinese church is doctrinal training for the lay people.

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<sup>1</sup>"Interview with David Lin," Tian Feng 3 (1992): 43.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>3</sup>K. H. Ting's press conference in New York on May 19, 1991.

### Summary and Conclusion

In summary, this chapter makes no attempt at a complete list of books, dissertations, articles on contextualized theology, Chinese religions, the Christian church, and radio ministry. Scores of such lists have been published. Selected materials have been mentioned to introduce the resources in this research and to provide assistance to those who wish to do further study.

Concerning the literature on contextualized theology or doctrine during the last four decades, in the doctrinal area the SDA church has provided several important books such as T. H. Jemison's Christian Beliefs (1959), Richard Rice's The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective (1985), and Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . . (1988) by the Ministerial Association of the GC of SDAs. In general, these books have contributed to the SDA church a worldwide unity of basic biblical and denominational doctrines. I regret that there are very few SDA doctrinal books in Chinese, and there are virtually none adapted to the current Chinese setting.

Related to the contextualized theology of the third world and Asia, there are not many Chinese-written works. The same situation applies in Chinese theology, church history, and the current China mission. Fortunately, Wing-Hung Lam's Chinese Theology in Construction and Lee-Ming Ng's article "The Promise and Limitation of Chinese Theologians, 1920-50" fill the gap of the history on Chinese theology. In light of the current Chinese theological situation, the article of Yi-fan Shen's "Chinese Christianity in Theological Reflections" and K. H. Ting's "The

Chinese Christian's Approach to the Bible" doubtlessly are the most significant. These point out historical and theological facts and changes in the Chinese church as well as pertinent parts of the Bible. Obviously they have taken the "Three-Self" position and have omitted some aspects which they were unwilling or unable to mention.

Reports on the Chinese church situation, China and Church of Hong Kong and Tien Feng, the official paper of Three-Self church of China, as well as China Notes in the United States are the representative publications which take different positions in dealing with issues of the current Chinese church.

Most of the books and articles on radio ministry are written in English by Western scholars. FEBC publishes its monthly pamphlet Far Eastern Broadcasting and HKEAC provides its quarterly newsletter Voice of Hope in Chinese; these report on the events relating to the radio ministry in China. In March 1987, the Adventist World Radio/Asia prepared to broadcast the Adventist message to China through the newly erected shortwave station in Guam.

In conclusion, after analyzing the contextualized theology, I realized the importance of effectively introducing biblical doctrine to the Chinese people. Since my study on non-Christian religions of China, I am even more convinced that the Chinese people desperately need the Good News from our Creator and loving Redeemer. In addition, I am aware of the apparent similarities and basic differences between the doctrines and beliefs of the non-Christian religions and Christianity.

As I reviewed Chinese church history, especially the SDA situation, I learned that the most urgent need of Christianity in China is how to enlist and nurture a new generation of dedicated gospel workers. Surveying the Christian usage of modern mass media, particularly the radio ministry, not only helped me realize its great value, but also strengthened my faith and hope in successfully evangelizing such a massive country as China. Recent statements and testimonies from native Chinese, foreigners, administrators, and evangelists all have served to enforce my conviction that lay training in doctrine through various approaches not only should be discussed and placed on our global mission agenda but should be promptly carried out in order to fulfill Jesus' Great Commission.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE BIBLICAL BASIS AND E. G. WHITE'S PERSPECTIVE ON THIS DOCTRINAL TRAINING PROGRAM

In this chapter I want to state that mission and cross-cultural ministry, the Christian usage of mass media, and lay training have a solid biblical basis as well as support from the writings of Ellen G. White.

In the first section I examine the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20), the last-day mission (Rev 14:6-12), the China mission, and their relationship to each another. The Great Commission geographically covers "all nations" and reaches "to the very end of the ages." The last-day mission shares the same geographic dimension as the Great Commission but emphasizes the mission in the time of the end. The China mission belongs to and obviously constitutes a significant component of global and last-day mission. I then point out that the Bible and Ellen G. White also shed much light on cross-cultural awareness in carrying out the mission work.

The second section attests that the Bible asks Christians to spread the gospel and save the people "by all possible means" (1 Cor 9:22).<sup>1</sup> Certainly one might not find the modern term of mass media in the Bible, but Scripture and Ellen G.

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<sup>1</sup>Scriptural passages are quoted from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated.

White do clearly show the importance of literature work and implicitly mention oral communication. Some statements even seem to hint at using electric waves in the last-day mission.

The final section points out that the Bible emphasizes discipleship, lay training, and doctrinal study, especially at the time of the end.

### Mission and Cross-Cultural Ministry

#### The Great Commission

Before His crucifixion Jesus foresaw the future and said: "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt 24:14). This was Jesus' prediction and promise: The gospel will be spread over the world. On another occasion He mentioned it again (Matt 26:13). The most familiar text certainly is the Great Commission in which Jesus commanded His disciples such an important task (Matt 28:18-20).

His disciples in every age accept this command and carry it out under the authority and power of the Sovereign Lord of the universe who laid down His life and overcame death for this world. Jesus' command says here that preaching and teaching are both needed; baptisms can be expected; and the triune God is involved in the ministry. This is a mandate as well as a promise of His presence from the first century until the end. This global commission relates to God's whole plan of salvation. Clearly one of the things which His disciples need to learn and teach repeatedly is discipleship training.

After His resurrection, Jesus assured His disciples: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). "Not by might nor by power" but by the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ will be preached everywhere. As a spark of fire that started in Palestine, it finally will become an ever-expanding flame to enlighten the whole world.

Jesus' death never changed this clear message. On the contrary, His resurrection and the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost strengthened it. In light of this Great Commission, we look at the mission of the time of the end.

#### The Mission of the Time of the End

According to the Bible, Jesus' time on earth initiated the last days (Heb 1:1-2; 1 Pet 1:19-20; 1 John 2:18). However, in light of the prophecies, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation (Dan 12:4) and other New Testament passages (Matt 24:29,22; Luke 21:5-37; 2 Tim 3:1-5; 2 Pet 3; 2 Thess 2; Jas 5:1-6), the final part of the last days, "the time of the end" started at the closing year of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> In Dan 8:17; 11:35,40; 12:4,9, this period is referred to as the time of the

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<sup>1</sup>See Dan 7:25-26; 12:7,4,9; Rev 12:6,14; 13:5. In adopting the year-day principle (Num 14:34; Ezek 4:6) on the interpretation of the prophetic date, these three-and-a-half years or 42 months or 1260 prophetic days represent 1260 literal years. The 1260 years started in 538 A.D. and ended in 1798 as the papacy received a nearly fatal blow. Around this time the remarkable cosmic phenomena occurred in fulfillment of biblical predictions regarding the time of the end (Matt 24:29; Mark 13:24-25; Rev 6:12). (See The Great Controversy, Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1950, chaps. 15; Bible Readings for the Home, Rev. ed. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1963, 209-210.)

end. Dealing with this idea in detail is out of the scope of this study.<sup>1</sup> I believe that we are living in the time of the very end of this earth's history.

Under the Great Commission we find an emphasis on mission in the time of the end. This last-day mission includes preaching the everlasting gospel, as Jesus stated that "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world" (Matt 24:14), as well as the present truth which is the three angels' messages applicable to our contemporary world (Rev 14:6-13). This last-day message combines the gospel and the warning that God's judgment hour has come to the world.

In prophecy the target audience of this message is worldwide--every nation, tribe, language, and people will have a chance to hear it.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, many people in different continents studied the Book of Daniel and almost simultaneously preached that Christ's second coming was at hand. Among them were the Advent believers in North America, who were called Millerites. They joyfully expected that Jesus would return at the appointed time to cleanse the sanctuary--this earth--as Dan 8:14 seemed to predict.<sup>2</sup> They won many souls to Christ and expected His imminent coming. They experienced their great disappointment on October 22, 1844. On the very day following the Disappointment, after prayer, the heavenly light came to Hiram Edson's mind; Edson suddenly realized that the Millerites were wrong in believing that this

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<sup>1</sup>See Gerhard Pfandl, The Time of the End in the Book of Daniel (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992).

<sup>2</sup>See P. Gerard Damsteegt, Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1988), 34.



planet is the sanctuary. "In Edson's interpretation, the sanctuary of Dan 8:14 was seen to be the heavenly sanctuary and not the earth or the church."<sup>1</sup> The Adventist believers had the experience of eating the little scroll, sweet at first but bitter afterward as predicted in Rev 10:8-10. However, the faithful remnants of this group, though under severe trial, did not give up their faith in Jesus and His imminent Advent. They were led by the Holy Spirit and entered into the truth of the heavenly sanctuary as well as the light of the Sabbath command.

After the description of that bitter disappointment the prophet says, "Then I was told, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings'" (Rev 10:11). A worldwide evangelistic work and the startling three angels' message prophecy became an emphasized mandate. Those who reject the heavenly message of the judgment hour will fall spiritually as did ancient Babylon. Those who persist in their wrong ways and false doctrines are doomed to suffer from God's indignation.

A glorious vision of the conclusion of the last-day mission is recorded in Rev 18:1-2: "I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. With a mighty voice he shouted: 'Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!'" The three angels' message as the present truth for this generation must be preached powerfully as symbolized here by the angel who shouted with a mighty voice. The whole earth will be illuminated by this message.

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<sup>1</sup>Damsteegt, 117-118.

As a result, any church organization or individual who learns but rejects this heavenly truth will be corrupt and collapse spiritually.

On the one hand, Gabriel already informed the Prophet Daniel and predicted: "But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge" (Dan 12:4). On the other hand, the prophet was instructed that in the time of the end, the wise will understand the prophecy while the wicked will not understand and will become more evil (Dan 12:3, 8-10). Church history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the increasing insights of Bible students, and the apostasy of historical criticism illustrate the two sides of prophetic truth. Earlier in the NT the Apostle Paul also charged Christian disciples to preach the Word and predicted the coming apostasy within Christianity itself (2 Thess 2:3-12; 2 Tim 4:1-5; Acts 20:29-30).

The last-day mission as the climax of the Great Commission and the consummation of this global mission must be carried out gloriously amidst the difficulties of the time of the end.

### China Mission

Since China has one fifth of the world's population, evangelizing China or obviously is an important part of the Great Commission in the last days.

The first modern missionary of the Protestant church, Robert Morrison, arrived in China in 1807. The first Adventist lay worker, the aged Abram La Rue, started his work in Hong Kong in 1888 and later labored in mainland China.

The Bible says: "Behold, these shall come from far: and lo, these from the north and from the west; these from the land of Sinim" (Isa 49:12). In this text the people of the north and west are mentioned. Where are those that come from the east? Some scholars claim that Sinim means China, because China was the largest remote country east of Israel.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus Himself predicted and promised several times that at His second coming "He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other" (Matt 24:31). In the same book Jesus praised the great faith of the Roman centurion: "I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 8:11).

There is no partiality or favoritism with God. China has more than one fifth of the world's population and is one of the largest countries on this planet. I assert that the greatest mission field and the largest number of unreached people in this last generation are in China. In view of its religious background and current government, I may further state that, according to what Jesus said in Matt 24:14, if the gospel of the kingdom is not preached in all China, either in different periods of times or simultaneously, then we do not have the right to expect Christ's imminent

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<sup>1</sup>K. S. Lee, China in the Bible (Cheung Chau, Hong Kong: Tian Fong Publishing House, 1957), 35-37. Isa 49:12 is identified by W. Gesenius, Thesaurus Linguae Hebraeae, 948-950. A remote or distant area should not refer to Aswan as in NIV. The size and direction do not seem to fit Aswan. However see the discussion in T. O. Lambdin, "Syene," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (1976), 4:471-2. Syene was then the southern-most known location in Egypt.

second coming, since it is God's will that everyone should have the opportunity to be presented the saving truth (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9). Miller believed the popular concept of his time—"gospel sun"—the gospel being preached in Asia, then Africa and Europe, then finally in America, the last quarter of the globe. "The gospel, like the sun, arose in the east, and will set in the west."<sup>1</sup> He used this analogy to explain the fulfillment of "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world" (Matt 24:14). In 1842 Miller also elaborated on the term of "witness." He remarked that "the text does not tell us that the gospel shall be preached in all the world at one time, or that all men would believe it; but as a 'witness among all nations.'"<sup>2</sup> It also signified the present truth being given to different racial and national groups who had come to America or the gospel reaching many different countries by various publications. Therefore, Millerites did not think it necessary that this message be given to every individual. However, we can now see that this popular concept was wrong.

Thanks to our merciful God who takes all Chinese people to His heart, He, during the past centuries, has sent the gospel there by different people and various channels. However, we are still far from finishing the mission work in that vast country of more than a billion people.

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<sup>1</sup>William Miller, "A Lecture on the Signs of the Present Times," Signs of the Times (Millerite), March 20, 1840, 4.

<sup>2</sup>Damsteegt, 51.

The last-day mission is a glorious part of the Great Commission and the China mission is an important component of that mission. Let us pay more attention to this great task and dedicate ourselves to do our portion faithfully and wisely in order to complete God's worldwide ministry and hasten Christ's second coming.

### Cross-Cultural Ministry

If we would successfully carry out the global mission, cross-cultural ministry must be considered seriously. Biblical truth should relate to the given society and its religio-social situation and cultural background. From the historical record in the Bible we find reference to this important issue. The Old Testament and the New Testament, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and especially the head of the church, Jesus Christ Himself, all have left us brilliant illustrations on relating the heavenly truth to different cultural settings. We have often neglected this. Below are some examples.

#### Abraham's example

Abraham, the forefather of the Israelites in the Old Testament, was called by Jehovah God, the Creator of the universe, to preserve the true knowledge of Him. Abraham remained true to the spiritual and moral absolutes such as worshipping and witnessing to the One and True Living God, and keeping a self-sacrificing and loving heart toward his ungrateful relative, Lot, and his Gentile neighbors. Abraham also adapted to the surrounding customs and culture when there was no contradiction to his faith.

Gen 14 is an illustration of this. Abraham gave a tenth of everything to the priest of the Most High God even though he was not a Hebrew. He himself did not receive "even a thread or the thongs of the sandal" from the King of Sodom. Meanwhile Abraham let his fellowmen have their share of goods.

Another instance in Gen 23 tells about the burial of Sarah. Abraham kept the principle of "covet not" but he also adapted to the local customs in securing the land to bury his wife. In this way Abraham successfully witnessed for the true God among the heathens.

#### Daniel and his three friends' example

While captives in Babylon, Daniel and his three good friends presented another example of cross-cultural ministry. In many areas they did not follow the idolatrous Babylonians (Dan 1, 3), but within limits they did adapt to the foreign civilization. They resolved not to defile themselves with the royal food and wine, but did learn their language and literature (Dan 1:4, 17). Daniel paid homage to King Darius, but yielded his first loyalty only to the heavenly King, even though it meant his life might be taken in the lion's den (Dan 5).

#### Jesus Christ's example

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ was the greatest pattern of carrying out cross-cultural ministry to this world. First "the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us" (John 1:14). Phil 2:7-8 says that Jesus Christ, "being in very

Jesus preached the heavenly truth in human language in the Jewish setting. When Jesus talked with a Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), He broke through the Jewish custom in order to meet the spiritual needs of a Samaritan woman. "Divine truth can be expressed in many different ways according to cultural forms, and we should be generally accepting as long as the essence of the gospel truth is undisturbed."<sup>1</sup>

#### Paul's example

Next to Christ Himself, Paul is considered the greatest evangelist and advocate of cross-cultural ministry in New Testament times. The remarkable passage of 1 Cor 9:19-23, says:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

The Apostle Paul took the gospel from Asia to Europe and organized numerous churches in different places. He did not impose Jewish culture and customs on the Gentiles because "people can only respond to a message they clearly hear in their own

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<sup>1</sup>Borge Schantz, "One Message--Many Cultures: How Do We Cope?" Ministry, June 1992, 8.

context."<sup>1</sup> "Religion is best understood as an aspect of everyday life, as something that makes sense to those who practice it, even if outsiders might be puzzled at first."<sup>2</sup>

"A Christian can be a cultural relativist and a biblical absolutist rather than absolutizing his own cultural ways or negating the impact of biblical truth."<sup>3</sup>

The Apostle Paul was a master of cross-cultural ministry. He was enlightened by heavenly wisdom as well as through his mistakes and successful experiences.

During the Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15), it appears that Paul only supported and defended such biblical absolutes as salvation coming from the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and there being no difference between Jews and Gentiles (Acts 15:11). He did not accept circumcision as a condition of salvation (see Acts 15:1-2), even though the majority of Jews ardently believed that this practice was essential to their salvation. After Paul's conversion he realized that "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation" (Gal 6:15). After Christ's crucifixion, the circumcision became a cultural thing. Paul carried through the decisions of the Council, but he did not place a yoke of Jewish cultural norms or requirements on the Gentiles. The guidance of the Holy Spirit was also appropriated to the Gentiles' situation (Acts 15:28-29).

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<sup>1</sup>Jon Dybdahl, "Cross-cultural Adaptation," Ministry, November 1992, 14.

<sup>2</sup>Daniel L. Overmyer, Religions of China: The World as a Living System (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 1.

<sup>3</sup>Martin K. Mayers, Christianity Confronts Culture: A Strategy for Cross-cultural Evangelism, rev. and enl. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 240.



When Paul was arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21), he spoke Greek with the commander and used Aramaic in preaching to the Jewish crowd--"when they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet" (Acts 22:2). That was the result! He used his Roman citizenship to protect himself and his ministry (Acts 22:26-29), while Paul appealed to the Jews, he claimed himself as one who was "circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews" (Phil 3:5). He called the Israelites "my brothers," "my own race" (Rom 9:3).

The Book of Acts is a great textbook recording all these happenings and shedding light on cross-cultural ministry. If Jesus or Paul had carried the gospel to China in their lives (at that time the Han Dynasty), certainly they would have paid attention to the cross-cultural problems in order to save more Han (Chinese) people.

#### Ellen G. White's Perspective on China and China Mission

About one hundred years ago, when many people still ignored that great oriental country, Ellen G. White, however, often mentioned China and the Chinese in her ministry and inspired writings.<sup>1</sup> These statements tell us much about Ellen G. White's concern for China and the Chinese people. She prayed for China, she

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Education (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1903), 262; idem, "Ellen G. White's Prayer," Manuscript Releases, vol. 4 (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981), 294; idem, "Mission Field at Home," North Pacific Union Gleaner, April 13, 1910; idem, "Laboring for Special Classes," chap. in Evangelism (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1946), 569; idem, "Heralding the Message in Other Continents," chap. in Evangelism, 415; "The Message Triumphant," chap. in Evangelism, 706.

supported the China mission in budget and personnel, and she respected the Chinese people. Two of her grandsons worked in China.<sup>1</sup>

Researching Ellen G. White's statements on China and the Chinese reveals some very interesting insights which encourage me greatly. She said:

I feel intensely over the needs of foreign countries, as they have been presented before me. In all parts of the world angels of God are opening doors that a little while ago were closed to the message of truth. From India, from Africa, from China and from many other places is heard the cry, "Come over and help us."<sup>2</sup>

White had insight into Chinese society and sympathized with the poor.

Here social study and justice is involved:

In India, China, Russia, and the cities of America, thousands of men and women are dying of starvation. The monied men, because they have the power, control the market. They purchase at low rates all they can obtain, and then sell at greatly increased prices. This means starvation to the poorer classes, and will result in a civil war.<sup>3</sup>

Her compassion toward other cultures and religions (Buddhism) is evident in this very interesting statement about the celebration of the Chinese Spring Festival in which the people would clear their debts. "This is a heathen custom that the Christian World would do well to imitate."<sup>4</sup> Another time as she was traveling she

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<sup>1</sup>See the file "White, Herbert and Henry and Work in China," Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 15 (emphasis supplied).

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, Vol. 5 (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 305 (emphasis supplied).

<sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, "The New Year," Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, December 16, 1884, paragraph 4.

found that "there were several Chinese houses in this small place in the desert . . .

[and] several Chinamen were bowing in reverence before their idols."

On one hand, she was thankful for her belief in the living God; on the other, she reflected to herself:

I was led to require, have I set up idols in my heart? Have I allowed anything to come between myself and God, that he should not be supreme in my affections? We need individually to make close investigation on this point. The love of money, pride in dress and display--anything that diverts the attention from God--becomes an idol.<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White on the way also took time with her son, Willie, to visit a Chinese school in Honolulu.<sup>2</sup>

White firmly rejected the poisonous herb from China, but she said: "I did take a little weak tea as a medicine." Ellen White recognized that it was important to individualize each situation and to consider each situation in the total context. This principle of dealing with social customs and traditions different from or opposite to our own is an important one in cross-cultural ministry. Herein lies a good illustration on how to deal with the customs and cultures of other countries. A cross-cultural principle is applied here--neither religious pluralism nor exclusivism and cultural ethnocentrism. Understanding the people by any means is an important trait for a missionary.

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, "Notes of Travel: From Battle Creek to Oakland, Calif.," Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, January 29, 1884, paragraph 18.

<sup>2</sup>Authur L. White, "Voyage on the Moana," The Ellen G. White Biography: The Early Elmshaven Years, vol. 5., 1900-1905 (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982), 22.

There is a great and grand work to be done. Some who are here may feel that they must go to China or other places to proclaim the message. They should first place themselves in the position of learners, and thus be tested and tried.<sup>1</sup>

She also asserted:

In some other lands, such as India and China, the workers must go through a long course of education before the people can understand them or they the people. And at every step there are great difficulties to be encountered in the work.<sup>2</sup>

Contextualization is effective but difficult. To complete the mission faster and better, cross-cultural awareness is necessary and of great importance.

### Mass Media Usage

Modern civilization realizes the powerful influence of mass media that can be good or evil. Here the biblical basis in a positive sense is discussed. First the various forms of communication between God and men are presented, followed by the literature work, and finally modern oral communication. Ellen G. White's related statements are also mentioned in this section.

### Prior Forms of Communication Between God and Men

In tracing human history and experience, we find that the Creator God has used many ways to communicate with His creation, humanity. According to the Book of Genesis, the members of the triune God not only communicated with one another

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Life Sketches of Ellen G. White (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1943), 374 (emphasis supplied).

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 6:25 (emphasis supplied).

(Gen 1:26; 6:3; 11:7) but also liked to communicate with humankind, Their treasured creatures.

Before the Fall, God talked with Adam and Eve face to face. Today, nature, which is God's handiwork, is still a good source of general revelation and a means for God to communicate and reveal His love, power, and sovereignty (Gen 1-2).

After the Fall, God communicated with humanity through dreams, visions, the Thummim and Urim, prophets and prophetesses, and priests (Num 12:6-8; Exod 28:30). He revealed His will and word through His servants. Amos 3:7 even says: "Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets."

In the New Testament period, "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us, we have seen His glory" (John 1:14). Philip asked:

"Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?' Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing His work" (John 14: 8-10).

After His resurrection, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be His representative to communicate with His children continually. At the same time, as a special revelation, along with the Old Testament, the New Testament Bible was delivered to mankind, ever telling of God's work and will.

## The Publishing Work

### The biblical statement

The publishing work is one kind of communication. Because oral communication alone is not enough, written materials in book form have proved to be lasting and their influence deeper. For this reason, the ancient prophets and God's servants often were commanded to write down what they saw in vision or dream, or what they learned from God. In fact, the triune God wrote certain important things for our benefit such as when God penned the Ten Commandments (Exod 32:15-16,32); the words Jesus wrote on the ground (John 8:6); the letter written on the human heart by "the Spirit of living God," etc. (2 Cor 3:3; Mal 3:16; Rev 5:1-3). Even still, there are always those such as the Jewish king Jehoiakim who burned Jeremiah's scroll. In fact, whatever contains the truth no one can utterly destroy because it is God's word. Ancient and modern, foreign and Chinese history give ample evidences of this point. God asked His servants to "write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it" (Hab 2:2).<sup>1</sup> This is still true to this day. Publishing God's will is a mandate.

Books at one time were copied slowly, until Johann Gutenberg of Germany (1400?-1468?) invented movable type.<sup>2</sup> Since then the publishing work has developed

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<sup>1</sup>Or, "so that whoever reads it may run with it," the footnote of NIV.

<sup>2</sup>In about the 8th century, wood-block printing was introduced in China. Entire pages were cut into blocks of wood, a process that saved time because of the vast number of characters. See China--The Land and the People, ed. Sheila Buff (New York: Gallery Book, 1988), 19.

rapidly. In the nineteenth century, the Bible Society set up one press after another. The publishing work has become one of the pillars of mass media and exerts a great influence on society. The history of the Bible including its writing, compilation, copying, printing, translating, circulation, and recording is the most profound illustration on the importance of mass media. Can we imagine if there were no Bibles in the world at all?! What would happen?

Ellen G. White's statement

Ellen G. White emphasized the important branch of mass media in her days--the publishing work.

In my relations to this cause I have been longest and most closely connected with the publishing work. Three times have I fallen, stricken with paralysis, through my devotion to this branch of the cause. Now that God has given me renewed physical and mental strengths, I feel that I can serve His cause as I have never been able to serve it before. I must see the publishing work prosper. It is interwoven with my very existence. If I forget the interests of this work, let my right hand forget her cunning.<sup>1</sup>

In this line, she made her famous reference to publishing as the "leaves of autumn":<sup>2</sup>

This is a work that should be done. The end is near. Already much time has been lost, when these books should have been circulated. Sell them far and near. Scatter them like the leaves of autumn. This work is to continue without

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 248-249 (emphasis supplied).

<sup>2</sup>See Ellen G. White, The Publishing Ministry (Hagerstown, Md:Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1983), 227, 343; idem, In Heavenly Places (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1967) 323; idem, Testimonies for the Church, 4:79,601-602. The term "leaves of autumn" as the symbol of the literature work appeared many times in her works.

forbidding of any one. Souls are perishing out of Christ. Let them be warned of His soon appearing in the clouds of heaven.<sup>1</sup>

### Modern Oral Communication

#### The biblical instructions

"By all possible means" (1 Cor 9:22) to save others was the Apostle Paul's determination. In this day we can apply this to all modern mass media. In addition to the publishing work mentioned above, here we look at another means of communication since our generation stepped into the electronic age decades ago. "All means" certainly includes radio broadcasts for our day. How can "the gospel of the kingdom" be preached "in the whole world" (Matt 24:14)? How can the vision-- "make known among the nations what He has done and proclaim that His name is exalted? Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world"--be fulfilled? (see Isa 12:4-5.) How can we call the people "all you ends of the earth" to turn to the living God and be saved (Isa 45:22)? Let us catch a new understanding of the following texts: "Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:14).

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world" (Ps 19:1-4).

These texts for David probably meant only the wonderful and mighty work of our Creator. Could these be applied today to modern radio broadcast? The Psalmist and

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Colporteur Ministry (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1953), 25 (emphasis supplied).



prophets did not realize it, but they foresaw the glorious global work of God, especially concerning the last-day mission, "having the everlasting gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth--to every nation, tribe, language, and the people" (Rev 14:6b). Could "another angel flying in the midair" (vs. 6a) be used as a symbol of modern radio broadcast (Rev 14:6)? "For the Lord will carry out His sentence on earth with speed and finality" (Rom 9:28).<sup>1</sup> There is almost no place on earth the electromagnetic wave cannot reach. No speed can surpass the speed of the radio wave which equals the velocity of light through which the True Light, the light of life, shines forth.

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the people, but the Lord rises upon you and His glory appears over you (Isa 60:1-2).

"For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light" (Ps 36:9).

Ellen G. White's instruction

Not only did Ellen White encourage the development of worldwide missions, she also wrote out many of the ideas she had as to how the people of the world should be evangelized. Note some of these statements concerning media in evangelism.

Means will be devised to reach hearts. Some of the methods used in this work will be different from the methods used in the work in the past: but let no one, because of this, block the way by criticism."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The King James Version says: "For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth."

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, Evangelism, 105.

If we would follow the opening providence of God, we should be quick to discern every opening, and make the most of every advantage within our reach. There is a fearfulness to venture out and run risks in the great work, fearing that the expenditure of means would not bring returns.<sup>1</sup>

They must make use of every means that can possibly be devised for causing the truth to stand out clearly and distinctly.<sup>2</sup>

God will have men who will venture anything and everything to save souls. Those who will not move until they can see every step of the way clearly before them will not be of advantage at this time to forward the truth of God.<sup>3</sup>

God directed in the invention of rapid travel, as well as rapid communication, that His work might be done in this generation.<sup>4</sup>

The end is near, and for this reason we are to make the most of every entrusted ability and every agency that shall offer help to the work.<sup>5</sup>

An open mind and innovations are needed in God's work. I think even though Ellen White did not mention the radio ministry directly, she at least implicitly touched on it as in her time, radio was just a new-born baby. Meanwhile she often stressed the publishing work as I stated above.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 122.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publ. Assn., 1923), 409.

<sup>5</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 6:440.

## Mandate of Discipleship

### Lay Training

"Disciple" in Greek means a learner, pupil, follower. It comes from the verb Μαθητεω to learn, understand, find out, discover, learn by experience, or attend a rabbinic school (John 7:15).<sup>1</sup> In Hebrew it is Lim-mood meaning instructed-accustomed, disciplined, learned, taught, used. The verb form is Lamad, to teach.<sup>2</sup> The term "disciple" or "disciples" as used hundreds of times in the New Testament appears only once in the Old Testament. Since the Greatest Teacher, our Savior Jesus Christ, came and called people to follow Him, many want to learn from Him and to be His followers: "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch" (Acts 11:26).

In the Bible we can find the list of Jesus' first twelve disciples (Matt 10:1-4). Later He appointed another seventy or seventy-two (Luke 10:1,17).<sup>3</sup> In Mark's upper room, besides the women, there were about 120 individuals (Acts 1:15). Before His ascension Paul gave the number at 500 disciples (1 Cor 15:6). After Pentecost, on two occasions 3000 and 5000 people were added to the newly formed churches (Acts 2:41; 4:4). Later, in spite of persecutions and difficulties, still more people in different countries accepted Jesus Christ and became His disciples or "Christians."

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<sup>1</sup>James Strong, "Disciple," A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament, (1988), 45-46; Barclay M. Newman, Jr., "Disciple," A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament (1971), 110.

<sup>2</sup>James Strong, "Disciple," A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible (1988), 60.

<sup>3</sup>The KJV, Chinese version, says 70. The NIV, according to some ancient manuscripts, says Jesus appointed 72.

In Paul's time, the faith of the Romans "is being reported all over the world" (Rom 1:8)--at least the Roman world. Jesus has commanded and promised: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:18-19). The first group of Jesus' disciples and followers had been asked to make others His disciples (Rom 1:5-6). When His disciples do what Jesus bids, His presence and help are ever promised and realized. Jesus also said: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message" (John 17:20). He taught them (Matt 5-7, Luke 11:1-4), molded them (Matt 11:29, Acts 4:13), trained them (Luke 9,10), and prayed for them (John 17) in order to equip them as a team of powerful workers for Heaven.

Christianity started from a risen Lord and developed as a living channel from small to great. In every generation Jesus' disciples follow His command and go forward to win people for Christ and His Kingdom. Some find their brothers as Andrew did Peter (see John 1:41). Some give witness to their best friends like Philip to Nathaniel (see John 1:45). Some share the good news with their fellow citizens as the Samaritan woman did (see John 4:39-40). Some teach their descendants like Lois to Eunice and Eunice to Timothy (see 2 Tim 1:5). Some are called to unknown places to preach to strangers or in the presence of kings as ancient Abraham, Jonah, and Paul (see Gen 12:1; Jonah 1:2; Acts 9:15).

Christianity stands on discipleship as Paul charged Timothy:

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you--guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us" (2 Tim 1:13-14).

Meanwhile "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim 2:2). As Jesus trained His disciples, Paul trained Timothy (1 & 2 Timothy), Barnabas trained Mark (Acts 15:39), and Priscilla and Aquila helped Apollos (Acts 18:24-28). Men and women in different places today need to be trained by all means in order to make disciples for Jesus.

### Bible Study and Doctrinal Training

The biblical concern

Bible study and being equipped with sound doctrine are very important for discipleship. Once Jesus said to the Sadducees: "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God" (Matt 22:29). There are two main factors that contribute to human mistakes—either we do not know God's word at all or we do not understand it and realize the power of it. As a result, we cannot get the light and power from God's word (Ps 119:130, Luke 1:37). God, through the prophet Hosea, said: "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge" (Hos 4:6). Jesus' disciple personally needs to follow the instruction to do the best to present oneself to God as one approved, "a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). The Bereans left a good example: "Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11).

Discipleship and training on doctrine become the life and glorious mission of Christianity. These last days require this. Preaching and teaching, evangelizing and nurturing should go hand in hand. Thus, we should "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:12) "to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). This is demanded especially in these last days.

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn away their ears from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry (2 Tim 4:3-5).

Ellen G. White's concern

White also commented on Paul's charge to Timothy concerning ministerial work, which should include the written and oral forms.<sup>1</sup>

Publication is important. Bible-study classes or doctrinal-training seminars are necessary also. Ellen White placed a high estimate on laymen's work. She realized the importance of lay training and doctrinal study and gave many counsels on it, such as:

The leaders in God's cause, as wise generals, are to lay plans for advance moves all along the line. In their planning they are to give special study to the work that can be done by the laity for their friends and neighbors. The work for God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work, and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Evangelism, 625; idem, Gospel Workers, 311.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers, 351-352 (emphasis supplied).

How can we find language to express our deep interest, to describe our desire that every soul should awake and go to work in the Master's vineyard? Christ says, "Occupy till I come."<sup>1</sup>

This means that only by including laymen's efforts can God's cause on earth be finished. The minister should work together with laymen in one accord.<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White also mentioned that the fundamental beliefs and the characteristics of the remnant church will unite all of God's people.<sup>3</sup> In another statement she claimed that intensive study of biblical doctrines is required.

In the word of God are grand truths that are worthy of intense study. Shall we neglect these great fundamental truths in order that we may enter into speculation or what has not been clearly revealed? Let us study the great truths of the Scriptures; they are sufficient to tax our minds to their utmost capacity.<sup>4</sup>

White also mentioned that God's servants should gain not only the knowledge of truth but also should train their spirituality.<sup>5</sup>

Those who would labor in word and doctrine, should be firmly established in the truth before they are authorized to go out into the field to teach others. The truth, pure and unadulterated, must be presented to the people. It is the third angel's message that bears the true test to the people. Satan will lead

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, "Redeem the Time, Because the Days Are Evil," Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, 21 April 1896, 241-242.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, "The Duty of the Minister and the People," Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, 9 July 1895, 433-434.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, Counsels to Writers and Editors, 79.

<sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, Medical Ministry (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1963), 102.

<sup>5</sup>Ellen G. White, Child Guidance (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1954), 493.

men to manufacture false tests, and thus seek to obscure the value, make of none effect, the message of truth.<sup>1</sup>

This means to be a teacher, one first must be a learner of truth. She also said that careful and prayerful study should be paid to the three angels' messages.<sup>2</sup>

Our people must grasp the fundamental doctrines in order to stand firmly amid the deceits of Satan. In this last generation we must preach God's word faithfully in order to edify people and to save them from false doctrine.

The light given me has been very forcible that many would go out from us, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. The Lord desires that every soul who claims to believe the truth shall have an intelligent knowledge of what is truth. False prophets will arise and will deceive many. Everything is to be shaken that can be shaken. Then does it not become everyone to understand the reasons for our faith? In place of having so many sermons, there should be a more close searching of the Word of God, opening the Scriptures text by text, and searching for the strong evidences that sustain the fundamental doctrines that have brought us where we now are, upon the platform of eternal truth.<sup>3</sup>

The Bible alone affords the knowledge of our salvation.

In His Word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience.<sup>4</sup>

All these statements confirm that Ellen G. White recognized the importance of laymen and their training in biblical truths and fundamental doctrines.

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Evangelism, 211.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, Selected Messages (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1958), 2:392.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, Evangelism, 363 (emphasis supplied).

<sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 5:740 (emphasis supplied).



Ellen G. White meaningfully quoted what William Tyndale once said: "Without the Bible it is impossible to establish the laity in the truth."<sup>1</sup>

### Summary

This chapter discusses our mission as stated in the Bible and Ellen G. White's writings. Christ's Great Commission to the Christians (Matt 28:18-20) embodies the concept of carrying the gospel to all the world. The last day mission--preaching the three angels' messages (Rev 14:6-12) will be the finishing part of Christ's Great Commission. China, being one of the largest countries in the world, falls within the scope of the great commission which has special relevance in these last days.

Cross-cultural ministry is another important aspect of successfully taking the gospel to a "Gentile nation" such as China. Illustrations of biblical characters who were involved in such ministry legitimize the continuance of cross-cultural ministry.

About a century ago, Ellen G. White many times mentioned China and the Chinese in her ministry and writings. Those statements clearly show her concern for China and the Chinese people. She earnestly prayed for China, respected the Chinese people, and supported the China mission. She also expressed her compassion toward other cultures and religions such as Buddhism and wanted Christians to learn some good things from them.

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, 246.

Throughout history God has employed different means to communicate His love and truth for salvation, from direct face-to-face oral communication, through writings, and through nature. Today mass media would fit into God's original intent for spreading His gospel.

Ellen G. White strongly stressed the publishing work. Books and pamphlets are be like "the leaves of autumn," scattered everywhere. Even though in her time there was no such thing as radio ministry, she always encouraged the use of new methods and to make the most of every advantage within our reach. She also believed that "God directed in the invention of . . . rapid communication."<sup>1</sup>

As many lay workers in China (and the greatest unreached people of the world) have not had the opportunity to study God's word systematically, it is of the greatest urgency that all means, including modern mass media, seminars, and Bible study classes be utilized to train and equip Chinese gospel workers, who then can massively evangelize China.

Ellen G. White also placed a high value on lay- training work which including serious Bible and fundamental doctrine study. She considered that the Bible alone affords the knowledge of salvation and protects us from the power of Satan.

Thank God for so many precious instructions through the Bible and Ellen G. White's writings that we can study and follow.

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 63, footnote 5.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### **THE WAY THAT LEADS TO TRUE HAPPINESS, WEALTH, AND LONGEVITY**

This project and its ideas have been justified biblically as well as encouraged by Ellen G. White's writings. All this clearly shows that this project is needed and valid.

Presenting the biblical doctrines in an attractive and convincing way now becomes a crucial issue. In this chapter I first evaluate the relevance of some biblical themes, especially those germane to SDA theology, in the contemporary Chinese context. Then I discuss the reasons why I consider that they do not fit very well into the Chinese milieu. For the second part, in the light of traditional and current Chinese thought and along with solid biblical reference, I submit a motif for the doctrinal study: The Way That Leads to True Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity. In the third part I list more reasons for choosing this familiar Chinese greeting as the doctrinal theme.

Some Suggested Themes for the Bible  
and SDA Doctrine

Theological and Socio-Political  
Considerations

While Christian theologians have proposed many different themes as the core of the Bible and theology, my purpose is to briefly examine some Adventist suggestions. Ellen G. White has profoundly presented the "Great Controversy" motif.<sup>1</sup> "The Reign of God" motif has been suggested by Richard Rice.<sup>2</sup> The "Sanctuary" motif is another as proposed by Fernando Canale in his class.<sup>3</sup> Earlier I suggested an "Immanuel" motif in a term paper for Canale's class.<sup>4</sup> In fact, a long list of themes or motifs can be produced. However, we must realize that China is not a country with a strong Christian background, and the Chinese people have been educated or brainwashed under the Communist regime of atheism and evolutionism for the last four decades. All the above motifs have contributed in helping the serious Christian to understand the Bible. However, any one of them taken separately is either too

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White's Conflict Series, especially the well-known The Great Controversy refers to this theme clearly.

<sup>2</sup>Rice, 13.

<sup>3</sup>I took Dr. Canale's THST 705 Theology and Practice of Ministry in Autumn 1991 at the SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He advocated this motif in the class.

<sup>4</sup>Later I found Jack W. Provonsa's book God Is With Us and Joseph Haroutunian's God With Us: A Theology of Transpersonal Life (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965). They used the same motif.

theological or too foreign for the common Chinese person to understand. In addition, some may be sensitive to the political climate of the current Chinese government.

"Immanuel" is a familiar term for most Christians. "God with us" is a beautiful theme permeating the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, which also has become a real spiritual reality to many Christians. However, for most Chinese people, the Hebrew word "Immanuel, which being interpreted "God with us,"<sup>1</sup> is not enough. Who is God? Where is your God? Does God really exist? What does "God with us" mean? All these are reasonable questions. Even though this theme may be appropriate for a Christian country, most likely it is not for the current Chinese setting.

Many Adventists greatly cherish the theme of the "Great Controversy." The common Chinese people already are bored with Lenin and Mao's theory of class struggle. For the contemporary government and political authorities, this theme may arouse some suspicion, especially with the background of modern Christianity and the SDA church. Radical atheists can use this as an excuse to attack the Bible and suppress the already limited religious freedom.

We should not fear, neither hide nor twist, any single word of God (Rev 21:8; 22:18-19; Matt 5:19). On the other hand, realizing the principles of mission, we ought to avoid unnecessary troubles that might bar our way in preaching the gospel. Related themes like "The Reign of God," "Paradise lost and Paradise regained," and

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<sup>1</sup>See Matt 1:23 (KJV).

even "Exodus" might incur suspicion from civil authority as in the day of Herod (see Matt 2:2-3). This has happened in the past.

The theme of "love," even though it is criticized under Marxism and Mao's ideology as bourgeois humanism, is still attractive to people who live where love is scarce. The problem is that this noble word has been abused, especially in current Western society, and the Chinese people need something concrete to grasp. The Chinese people approach religion in a pragmatic way. John Lagerway claimed that the religions of China are more Taoistic than Confucian. The reason he gives is: "Ordinary people are never too concerned with the lofty questions of theologians or philosophers, rather they are occupied with the welfare of the family, the education of their children and payment of the mortgage and other expenses of living."<sup>1</sup> Apart from these theological, sociological, and political considerations, another option still remains.

#### Contextualized or Indigenous Consideration

The introduction of Christianity could be related to the ancient Chinese philosophical thought on "Yi"--change, "Yin Yang"--positive and negative, or "Dao"--way, and "Ren"--benevolence; however, the younger generation would not be familiar with these. Such ideas are too academic and abstract for the common person, especially when one remembers that the educational level for most Chinese people is

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<sup>1</sup>John Lagerway, Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History, quoted in Franklin J. Woo, "Seed Thoughts on Religious Tradition Amid 'Modernity'," 658.

less than the ninth grade.<sup>1</sup> Applying the biblical theme to these philosophical and religious terms will not work. I am convinced that if traditional Confucianism is considered as an art of living, Taoism as a way of nature, Buddhism as a path of escape,<sup>2</sup> and Communism as an attempt to build the "Heavenly Kingdom" on earth, then Christian beliefs must be substantially different from all of them. On the other hand, Christianity can relate to all these ideas. Human beings ever struggle with suffering, bondage, poverty, sickness, and death. They are looking for something better.

### The Proposed Motif Defined

In the light of all these factors and being aware of the current situation in China with its dramatically ideological change from dogmatic to pragmatic, Western orientation rather than Orthodox Communism, I prefer, after serious consideration and a certain amount of study, to recommend the following theme for introducing Christian fundamental beliefs to the common Chinese people: The Way That Leads to True Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity. I feel that this theme combines the life here with the life hereafter, the spiritual with the material, and Chinese tradition as well as the current resurgent thought with the biblical way. This is a familiar Chinese expression of congratulations. It is the wish of most ancient and modern Chinese, a bridge to

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<sup>1</sup>Pang Li, "The Governmental Work Report," People's Daily (overseas ed.), April 2, 1993, 1. It says that recently 76 percent of the people living in the villages only have a sixth-grade universal education.

<sup>2</sup>See Yang, 13.

lead many people from the known to the unknown, from earthly to heavenly pursuits, from disappointed mortals to a loving Father, eternal Friend.

After Jesus said "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt 24:14), He also asked:

Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns (Matt 24:45-46).

To be faithful to the Master and what He said is our first priority (1 Cor 4:2; Rev 17:14; 19:14), then we must be wise also. Without faith there is no real wisdom at all. Without wisdom the cause in spreading our faith will be hindered.

Contextualization should not refer to syncretism or religious pluralism, but it should mean that we are faithful to the Master's bidding and wisely give the proper food at the proper time to the proper people in the given area.

While the message we have to give is sacred, and needs no change, the methods we used to propagate it are not necessarily sacred, and should be changed to meet the advanced opportunities offered by each succeeding generation.<sup>1</sup>

This theme--The Way That Leads to True Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity--may seem a new idea to the church, but it still retains the old content. To the modern Chinese it becomes new content with an old form. My aim is to attract more people to Christ, the source of every blessing.

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<sup>1</sup>Jones, 94.



Before Christ's second coming, the church will enter many unreached areas and preach the gospel to billions of people who did not know anything about Jesus and the Christian Bible. Jesus' instruction here has special value.

Reasons for proposing this "Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity" motif follow.

### Reasons for Adopting the Proposed Motif

Besides the considerations why traditional biblical themes do not fit very well into the Chinese milieu and why ancient Chinese philosophical or religious terms are strange to the modern Chinese, reasons for adopting the proposed motif are presented below.

### Jesus Christ and the Scriptures Support This Theme

The first and the most important reason for this theme is that the whole Bible and Jesus Christ, including His teachings, fit this theme. Christ is truly the source of our happiness (Pss 73:26; 119:57; 142:5; Luke 1:47), of wealth (Ps 16:5; Prov 3:16; Mark 10:29-30; 2 Cor 8:9), and of eternal life (Deut 30:20; Ps 36:9; John 1:4; 11:25; 14:6; Col 3:4; 1 John 5:12). Why should I not introduce Him in this familiar way to the Chinese?!

When Christ taught and preached, He often touched all these aspects of life. Happiness and blessing were His favorite topics (Matt 5:3-12; 11:6; 13:16; 24:46; Luke 6:20; 12:37; John 13:17; 14:28; 15:11; 16:20,22,24; 17:13; 20:29; Acts

20:35). He mentioned money and wealth on many occasions (Matt 6:19,21; 19:21-22; Mark 12:41; Luke 12:15-21; 16:13-14). A healthy life, especially eternal life, was one of His most important messages (Matt 9:12; 6:25; 10:39; 16:25-26; Mark 8:36; Luke 12:15; 17:33; John 5:26; 6:35,51,53; 8:12; 10:10; 11:25; 14:6,20).

In fact, the whole Bible is concerned with this "Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity" motif in its deeper sense. The Old Testament especially shows that the Hebrews valued their material welfare and physical needs. In their thinking, God's promise never separated or severed the material blessings from the spiritual gifts (Isa 35; Jer 33; Ezek 47; Amos 9:11-15; Joel 3:17-18; Mic 4, etc.). The New Testament, even though it was written within the Greek-Roman cultural background, avoided falling into the pit of dichotomy or making an antithesis between material things and the soul (Matt 4:4, 23-24; 6:11-12,33; 12:1-14; 15:29-32; Luke 8:55; John 21:5,13).

In the original creation and coming Restoration, the world, as well as human beings, is included in the material form and substance. God "has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men" (Eccl 3:11). "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good" (Gen 1:31) and "God blessed them" (Gen 1:28). Eden was perfect for human beings to enjoy with happiness (Gen 1:26-30), wealth (Gen 2:11-12), good health, and everlasting life (Gen 2:7,9,15). In the glorious future, we shall become imperishable and honorable (see 1 Cor 15:42-44). Rev 21-22; Isa 35, 65; Rom 8:18-23, and many passages in the Bible tell us about this whole being of creation and restoration. "The ransomed of the Lord

will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads.

Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away" (Isa

51:11). In fact,

The Bible is not a treatise in systematic theology. The Bible and biblical Christianity are concerned with revealing and mediating to men a way of life by which they can become new, free men--be 'reborn' as John calls it, become 'New creations' as Paul calls it.<sup>1</sup>

"Religion must be of use to men or else it is no use at all. There is no sense in holding a system of beliefs unless in some way it helps personal living."<sup>2</sup>

### Fits with Longing of People

The second reason I adopted this motif is that normally no one on this earth desires sorrow, privation, or sickness. Most people expect happiness, wealth, and longevity. This is self-evident and almost a universal truth. It expresses the longing of people.

As Joseph presented his father the patriarch Jacob to Pharaoh, the Egyptian king asked, "How old are you?" Jacob said to Pharaoh: "The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers" (Gen 47:8-9).

"Few and difficult" years is the experience of most people during their lifetime. So many religions, philosophies, and modern "isms" want to solve this

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<sup>1</sup>W. Burnet Easton, Jr., Basic Christian Beliefs (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 33.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 75.

problem. People attempt to find ways to reach an ideal life. However, the pursuit of happiness can be compared to drawing water with a bamboo basket. What is true happiness, wealth, and long life? Where and how can one get them? Some people despair and give up. The rest do not yield but continue to strive for their personal and/or social happiness, wealth, and longevity.

This is certainly the case with Chinese people. "For generations the pursuit of wealth, health and longevity seemed to be the major preoccupation of the majority of Chinese."<sup>1</sup> They desire "three principal aspects of happiness: the religious, the social and the material."<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile "longevity is one of the blessings most devoutly hoped for by the Chinese."<sup>3</sup>

Men and women are longing for the abundant life. This is natural and normal. The Chinese traditionally have always been seeking happiness, wealth, and longevity. I wish to introduce this kind of life to my native people through Jesus and God's word--the Bible.

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<sup>1</sup>Woo, 658.

<sup>2</sup>Wolfgang Bauer, China and the Search for Happiness, trans. Michael Shaw (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 8.

<sup>3</sup>Thompson, 50.

### Fits with Chinese Ideas of Past

The third reason for using this "Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity" motif is that not only does it fit with everyone's natural wishes, but it also fits with the Chinese mind-set.

According to Chinese scholars Ch'u Chai and Winberg Chai, several characteristics of life reveal the attitudes of the Chinese people.

#### Life is good

In general, the ancient Chinese saw that life is good.

Nearly all the philosophers of the Confucian school appreciated the good life. Thus we read in Yi Ching: 'For the universe, the most essential is life. For the sage, the most precious is state. That which maintains the state is man. That which maintains the people is wealth. The administrations of wealth, the education of people, and the prohibition of wrongdoing are his righteousness.'<sup>1</sup>

The native Taoism and its works tend to hedonism. Yang Chu said: "We ought to hasten to enjoy life and pay no attention to death."<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile the imported Buddhism considers life itself as the root and fountainhead of its suffering. However, even the very essence is negatively expressed. It is to escape or find release from suffering. Thus they seek the Pure Land or Western Paradise.

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<sup>1</sup>Ch'u Chai and Winberg Chai, The Changing Society of China (New York: New American Library, 1969), 126.

<sup>2</sup>Compare with Isa 56:12 and 1 Cor 15:32.

"Ren Ai"--kindheartedness

Another Chinese attitude toward life is cherishing "Ren Ai" (kindheartedness). "Ren" is the core of Confucius' thought. He believed that "Ren consists in loving others."<sup>1</sup> Mencius, after Confucius, said of "Ren": [It] "is the love due to man. . . . One who loves men will certainly be loved by them."<sup>2</sup> It is not an equal or universal love. "Ren" is expressed in "Hsiao" (filiality) which begins with the family (children to parents) and becomes the cardinal factor in good relations in society. "Ren" plays an important part in the relations between different kinds of people. Here is common ground with Christianity and Bible doctrine. We can thus build up new structures with old materials.

Optimistic and rational  
happiness

The third characteristic of the Chinese attitude to life is a rational approach to happiness.

The Chinese have always been interested in the problem of happiness, and their approach to it is very rational. A Chinese depends for his happiness not on the external circumstances, but on his own virtue. He wants only what

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<sup>1</sup>Confucius, Analects, XII, 22. For the English translation, see James Legge, The Four Books: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, and the Works of Mencius, (Shanghai, China: Chinese Book Company, 1933), or Arthur Waley, The Analects of Confucius, (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1945).

<sup>2</sup>Chai and Chai, 127.

leads to happiness, and at the same time does not insist on having what is beyond its reach.<sup>1</sup>

A Chinese idiom says that one who is content is always happy. Confucius himself was content with his simple life and happy "to eat only vegetables and drink only water, with bent arms for a pillow." He also noted: "Ill-gotten wealth and honors are to me as wandering clouds."<sup>2</sup> Happiness and virtue are correlates and complementary to each other. Both are simply phases of a continuous whole in the universe. Christianity to a greater extent offers positive thinking and a more healthy lifestyle.

Preferred the happiness of this world

The Chinese prefer to savor enjoyment in this world and in the present life rather than in the world to come. Once, when Confucius answered the question on the meaning of death, he simply replied: "Not yet understanding life, how can you understand death."<sup>3</sup> It seemed he was an agnostic. This does not mean that the Chinese deny the spiritual sphere. They look mainly for the betterment of this present life in this world. At the side of a deathbed, a Chinese prefers to say that he comes to console the prosperity of his/her descendents rather than to bring the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 128.

<sup>2</sup>Confucius, Analects, VII, 15.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., XI, 11.

promise of future life. Here wholistic salvation can make a great contribution and provide the necessary correction.

### Moderation

Another characteristic of the attitude toward life by the ancient Chinese people is moderation--the so-called "doctrine of the golden mean" that has had a great influence on the Chinese.<sup>1</sup> Everything that does not go to the extreme is a golden rule. This fits with the biblical viewpoint.<sup>2</sup> "This is a way of action that avoids going to extremes, a state of mind in which human reasoning and feeling reach perfect harmony."<sup>3</sup>

My proposed motif does not contradict with but fits into the best part of Chinese traditional thinking on life. However, this is not the indigo blue bluer than the indigo plant. These Chinese thoughts and my proposed theme only have similarities in their terms, or certain contents, but have basic differences in their essence. Using the similarities to arouse interest will avoid resistance at the very beginning. This is one of the advantages or merits of contextualization.

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<sup>1</sup>It is not involved with the Taoists' concept of Yin-Yang. Moderation here means within the reasonable limits, not excessive or extreme.

<sup>2</sup>Rom 12:3; Pss 131; 8:3-9; Gen 1:27, 2:7; Luke 15:21-24.

<sup>3</sup>Chai and Chai, 130.



The Impact of Foreign Philosophy  
Did Not Change Chinese Pursuits

The fourth reason I propose for using this motif is that happiness, wealth, and longevity are the changeless goals of any generation. I find that under the serious impact of imported philosophy and religion, traditional Chinese thinking has not changed. There were several periods of Chinese history characterized by different trends of thoughts. I refer mainly to syncretic Buddhism, the modern Western philosophy, and atheistic Communism. Nevertheless, during the encounter with the old traditional concept of life, these foreign ideas were actually revised or somewhat reformed. The Chinese people adapted themselves to the new challenge but did not change course. In particular it seems that neither the old nor the new thoughts changed their goal--happiness, wealth, and long life. It does not matter what different terms are used--Buddhism's Pure Land, Western countries' utopia, and rich Capitalism or Communism without exploitation. It does not matter how they reach this ideal--individually or socially, life here or in paradise, or what trials they go through to reach it--personal cultivation, education, or violent revolution. Searching for "happiness, wealth, and longevity" is just like the law of gravity. All turn to it. I want to catch this aspiration and at the same time cast spiritual light and new meaning on it. In this section we look at the three major trends in Chinese thinking.

Adaptation of Buddhism: Its  
influence and problems

Confucianism has dominated Chinese thought for about 2500 years, even

though it was encountered by Taoism and Buddhism. From the tenth to the seventeenth centuries, Neo-Confucianism rose. It was "a kind of summing up or revision of the ethics, morals, and beliefs of the past, and such was in keeping with the spirit of the times."<sup>1</sup> It was a reconciliation between the classic Confucianism's "this worldliness" and imported Buddhism's "other worldliness." The Neo-Confucianism proposed "Li"--reason--as the fundamental truth and prime doctrine in the universe. This is close to Taoism's concept of "Tao"--the way, the rule. At the time, it tended to take a more pragmatic approach to life.<sup>2</sup>

It is not difficult to discover that during the long history of China, the Chinese people were influenced by classic and Neo-Confucianism's philosophy of life. They looked for happiness, health, and long life, but in the light of certain virtues--kindheartedness, contentment, and moderation.<sup>3</sup> They did not give up moral values as they pursued the physical world and its goodness. They appreciated the present life and enjoyed the world in a unique way. At the same time, obviously, they were weak in spiritual things and their hereafter-world concept was contaminated with superstitions and was under the shadow of cults, animism, and ancestor worship. To these deficiencies, Christianity can make a great contribution.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 142.

<sup>2</sup>See Overmyer, 49.

<sup>3</sup>See Chai, 128.

## Modern Western philosophy's thrusts on Chinese thinking

After Neo-Confucianism, the second great impact took place at the beginning of the twentieth century. The last feudal Ching Dynasty gave way to the modern republic of China. Before this, the foremost scholar, Liang Chi'i Chao (1873-1929), described the last two or three centuries as the stage of Renaissance in Europe.<sup>1</sup> The first part of this century was a stage of turbulence in China. All established institutions--marriage, the family, society, the state, and law--were under ruthless criticism. At the May 4 Movement of 1919 a pinnacle was reached. The people, especially young students and the intellectuals, attacked Confucianism, feudalism, and imperialism (which included the Westernized religion--Christianity and the Catholic church). They hailed Western democracy, freedom, and universal love. They expected China to become a rich, strong country with healthy people. However, not only did the Chinese accept the thought of "Enlightenment" from the eighteenth century, but historically Marxism, Leninism, evolutionism, and modern atheism were later ushered in. This challenged the traditional thoughts of the Chinese as well as Western philosophy and religion.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Chai, 145.

<sup>2</sup>Julia Ching, Probing China's Soul (San Francisco, Harper and Row, Publishers, 1990), 108-109, 80.

### The ideology of Communism: Its renovation and impact

The third strong trend was the upheaval under the Communist regime.

The spirit of the Chinese culture and the mood of the people were changed forcibly and remarkably. The new ideology of Communism was successfully transplanted into the peoples' minds. However, many in the older generation still retained much of the old philosophy of life and conventional religion--Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, or Western Christianity. What the Communist regime and government emphasized was not the traditional thought-trend of the Chinese people. "Confucian harmony is not Marxist struggle, Confucian permanence is not Marxist process, Confucian moralism is not Marxist materialism."<sup>1</sup> Religious thought, or the old moral code, as well as philosophy whether in feudal or Western form, was under fire. A materialistic "heavenly Kingdom"--Communism--was the goal. "Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity," the old substances, put on a new garment. The object was the same, but the means of getting it was totally different. Happiness, wealth, and longevity were not gained through "Ren Ai" (kindheartedness) but by class struggle.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, "serving the people" and "dedication to motherland" rang in the ears of all people all day long; it even became a part of the spirit of the whole nation when I was in high school in the fifties.

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph R. Levenson, Modern China and Its Confucian past: The Problem of Intellectual Continuity (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1964), 210-211.

<sup>2</sup>Ching, 79-97.

The renovation of Chinese Communism--the latest change of Communism in China--occurred in the early eighties. As China again opened its doors to Western countries, the influence of modern mass media infiltrated every family in this once-isolated country. As the so-called "iron curtain" or "bamboo curtain" countries of the Communist bloc tumbled down one after another, as exchange programs between China and Western countries were carried out year by year, as Chinese people lost their confidence in the poverty of Communism and man-made "isms," the people felt bored with class struggle. Profit and personal interest have become modern idols. Hedonism resurges and "making money" and "getting rich" are the fashionable slogans. "Eat much and spend the last penny for physical health" has become the motto. "Happiness, wealth, and longevity" have come back to grip people's hearts in a degraded sense. It is regrettable that many people seek these normal elements of life in an immoral state of mind and with the wrong ways.

All these three great forces--Neo-Confucianism, Western philosophy, and Communism--have exerted a great influence on Chinese thinking, but as the Chinese idiom says: "Change ten thousand times without departing from the original aim or stand." The axle center of human history is still pursuing "happiness, wealth, and longevity." It does not matter whether it is through traditional Chinese philosophy or religions, Western thoughts, or Marxist Communism and its new form. All are different in approach but are equally striving for the same goal. This is the fourth reason why I have proposed this motif.

Summary

Many Christians and scholars have proposed different themes or motifs on the Bible and its teachings. "Immanuel," "Love," "Creation and Redemption," "Sanctuary," "Covenant," and "The Great Controversy" are some of these. Even though these contribute more or less to Bible study, these motifs do not seem to fit very well with the theological, sociological, and political situation in China. If we present the biblical theme in ancient philosophical terms or doctrines of Chinese conventional religions, the younger generation will not be familiar with it and we could easily get off the right track.

There are many reasons for adopting this proposed motif. The first and most important one is that the Bible, Jesus Christ, and His teaching all fit the "happiness, wealth, and longevity" motif. Jesus Christ is the very way which leads people to all God's spiritual as well as material blessings here and hereafter. Thank God that what men wished but could not gain, He bestows upon His children. God has richly provided all blessings in Christ. In Christ, we have faith, hope, and love. In Him we "have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). This is the final solution to our human problems. This theme also is adapted to the universal longing for happiness, wealth, and longevity in the light of "few and difficult" years of our human life. It also fits with the Chinese ideas of the past such as life is good (especially as Confucianism and Taoism advocated), people should cherish "kindheartedness," optimistic and rational happiness is desirable, the happiness of this

world is preferred, and moderation is the golden rule. In addition, no matter how Chinese traditional culture was greatly challenged or influenced by imported Buddhism, Western philosophy, or Communism, the never-changing pursuits of happiness, wealth, and longevity justify this theme. Thus, related to the Chinese cultural background and the current situation, perhaps the "Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity" motif will prove helpful to draw numerous Chinese to Christ, the Desire of Ages, the Way, the glorious Hope and the Source of every blessing.

## **PART II. THE THEME AND ITS APPLICATIONS**



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE "HAPPINESS, WEALTH, AND LONGEVITY" MOTIF AND FUNDAMENTAL BIBLICAL DOCTRINE

#### Introduction

The Chinese view of religion tends to be pragmatic. Wholeness is one of the Chinese people's chief cultural characteristics. In addition, the current Chinese political situation and its non-Christian religious background, and in particular, the manipulation of Communism for decades all tell me one thing: To avoid unnecessary suspicion and to enhance receptivity to Christianity, I must lay aside many traditional motifs on biblical doctrine. These motifs might be effective in the Western world, but most likely they are not suitable for China and its current setting. I prefer to submit "The Way That Leads to True Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity" as the theme of biblical doctrines. Here happiness covers three principal aspects--religious, social, and material blessings. Wealth embodies not only material wealth but also richness in other dimensions of life. Longevity symbolizes not only health and life on this earth but also life hereafter. The Bible says: "You have made known to me the path of life, you will fill me with joy in your presence" (Ps 16:11; see also Acts 2:28).

The first part of this chapter discusses the general and SDA understanding of the structure of biblical doctrine. I then rearrange the order of fundamental beliefs, with a brief explanation. In addition, I also include the biblical concept of "blessing" as an integration of all happiness, wealth, and longevity.

The second part applies my proposed motif--The Way That Leads to True Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity--to the doctrine of God, the doctrine of man/woman, and the doctrine of Salvation, item by item. Due to the length of this chapter, I have included only as examples selected applications to the rest of the biblical doctrines. Finally, I give a brief summary.

### Understanding and Expression in the Structure of Biblical Doctrine

#### General Arrangement

Many systematic theology works present a conventional sequence, as shown in the following brief outline:

1. Doctrine of revelation
2. Doctrine of God
3. Doctrine of man
4. Doctrine of salvation
5. Doctrine of the church
6. Doctrine of last-day events.

I realize the doctrine of biblical revelation and the doctrine of God are the

two main pillars of Christian theology. They closely relate to and supplement each other. Because the authority of the Bible depends on the Triune God, the special revelation of God focuses on the Bible. Thus both of these are usually put at the very beginning of Christian doctrine.

The same is true, as the Bible reveals, that God's relationship with man/woman occurred first at creation. God and humanity are closely related. Thus the doctrine of man/woman (anthropology) follows naturally. Because of sin, the perfect relationship between the Creator God and created humanity was marred. The original creation was left defective. Human beings need to be saved or redeemed. The doctrine of salvation (soteriology) is demanded. In fact, the essential relationship between God and humankind was revealed in creation as well as in redemption. These are the two greatest events to humanity. Believing on Jesus Christ has become the focal point of salvation. How to receive new spiritual life in Him is also presented here. The whole plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, positively speaking, will bring life in all its fullness to the believer. In negative terms, it means Christ finally will destroy sin and death. The doctrine of salvation is prominent in Christianity.

However, before the believers can reach heaven to enjoy everlasting life or return to the lost Eden, they are called out by God into God's household, the church. Thus the doctrine of church and church life is stated.

Traditionally, the final section presents the last-day events which will lead

up to Christ's second coming, the consummation of God's redemption.

Thus it is not too difficult to understand why theologians present the fundamental doctrines in such a sequential arrangement. They need to present the Christian faith and biblical doctrines in a logical way, to give them a sense of relationship.

### SDA's Doctrinal Arrangement

The book Seventh-day Adventists Believe essentially presents these doctrines in the same order. Only the first section--the doctrine of revelation--is placed under the category of the doctrine of God. (This does not mean that the SDA church has neglected the importance of the doctrine of revelation. In the section of doctrine of church, there is another chapter entitled "The Gift of Prophecy" which also studies God's revelation.)

Because one part on the general list is skipped, a section under doctrine of Christian life is added. Theology not only continues the good heritage from the past, but also reflects the emphasis or special features of certain religious communities. Obviously the SDA church values and stresses the Christian life. In fact, it has made a strong impression on other Christian bodies regarding this point. Seventh-day Adventists advocate wholistic salvation and do not wish to separate the relation of gospel and law, faith and works, body and mind, life here and life hereafter.

As some systematic theologies prefer not to comment a great deal on future

events, the SDA church remarkably elaborates on last-day events and considers it a part of the present truth. Preaching on it is its privilege as well as responsibility in sharing with other people.

Personal Understanding and  
Adjustment on Doctrine  
Outlines

I think that theology should be expressed contemporaneously and contextually. Let the systematic, historical, and denominational theology be relevant to the given generation and targeted nation and people.

For this reason, I support traditional biblical truth and SDA beliefs on the one hand. However, as stated above, I like to consider the Chinese cultural, religious, and political sphere in presenting the fundamental doctrines, integrating them around the motif "The Way That Leads to True Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity." I thus wish to attract and save more Chinese people to God's kingdom. Moreover, the order of these doctrinal series needs to be adjusted in that China is not a Christian country and has few churches. The Chinese like to deal with concrete things, so I have placed the doctrine of Christian life right after the doctrine of salvation and before the doctrine of last events and the doctrine of church. Consequently, once an individual has been saved, a new life emerges. He or she will take a new look at God's law. This new spirit enters into various realms of life--personal behavior, family relations, and social activities. The doctrine of Christian

life also teaches people how to deal with time and money, etc.

I have moved the doctrine of last-day events before the doctrine of church, because in addition to the given situation in China, only after individuals have understood and believed (1) God's existence, His precious word, and loving attributes; (2) humanity's past, present, and future situations; (3) the matchless love of Christ and God's plan of salvation as well as the new creation in Him, and (4) the soon coming of Christ will they be prepared to accept the call and join God's household and remnant church.

#### The Biblical Concepts on "Blessing"

The Chinese people conventionally consider "happiness, wealth, and longevity" as one component of the whole blessing,<sup>1</sup> the others being peace, fertility, and social status. Before I apply the concept of happiness, wealth, and longevity separately to the various doctrines, I point out the biblical concepts of "blessing" as an introduction. According to the Bible:

1. All blessings come from God (Jas 1:17). The Chinese have this expression also.
2. God is willing to pour down His blessing on men and women (Isa 44:3; Ezek 34:26).

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<sup>1</sup>The Bible also has the same idea or concept of the "blessing." Job 1, 2, and 42 and Rev 18 are examples.

3. God gives all kinds of blessings--earthly and heavenly, physical and spiritual (Gen 49:25; Ps 21:3; Eph 1:3). Sometimes even suffering is a blessing in a disguised form (Matt 5:10; Phil 1:29; Ps 76:10).

4. What God gives is not like the world gives (John 14:27).

5. He does not force us, but lets us choose and ask for blessings from Him (Deut 30:19; Matt 7:11).

6. God wants us to be a living channel of His blessings (Gen 12:2; 22:17-18).

These points have shown us the issue of blessing which includes happiness, wealth, and longevity as related to humankind, but is God-centered instead of human-centered. It is a relationship between a loving God and the believer rather than a relationship between owner and customer. It is not just a spiritual blessing or a material benefit, but both. It is on earth as well as in heaven. It is not limited to individuals but extends to other people as well.

In this section I have mentioned the general and SDA arrangement of doctrinal structure within my understanding. I have explained the reason for my adjustment of the sequence of doctrines as well as the suggested theme as a reference point to this doctrinal study. In addition, I have presented the biblical concepts of blessing as an integrating part to it. The following section describes how this theme and its components relate to the fundamental beliefs of Christianity.

Doctrine of GodThe Word of God (Fundamental  
Belief #1)

The Word of God teaches people how and where to get happiness, wealth, and life. For all believers the Bible itself has become their very happiness, true wealth, and life in both the physical and spiritual sense.<sup>1</sup>

### Happiness

In a time of loneliness and distress, the Prophet Jeremiah said: "When your word came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight" (Jer 15:16). Job also had the same experience, even in his terrible distress (Job 23:12; Ps 119:103). So whether young or old, in temptation or under severe trial, God's Word always brings joy to His people.

### Wealth

Gold always is considered as one of the most valuable things. People seek it by all means. But for God's children there is something else that is appreciated more. The Psalmist acknowledged: "I love your commandments more than gold, more than pure gold" (Ps 119:127). "The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold" (Ps 119:72). God's children acknowledge the true value of His Word, His law and commandments.

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<sup>1</sup>See Pss 119:14, 16, 25, 57, 93, 103, 111, 127, 149, 162, 170, 175; Matt 19:26-22; Luke 11:27-28; John 5:24-25; 17:13.



## A long life

When many people misunderstood what Jesus said and left Him, Peter claimed: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Here longevity at its best is perceived by Peter as coming only from the Lord.

God's Word can teach and actually bring us real happiness, wealth, and a healthy, long life in both the physical and spiritual sense.<sup>1</sup> "Blessed is the one who reads the words. . . . Blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written" (Rev 1:3). Mary sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what He said. Jesus considered that Mary had chosen the better blessing which would "not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42).

When the objective common value has become the personal subjective experience, God's Word must bring joy, satisfaction, riches, and life to those who listen to and follow the Word of God. This is in stark contrast to such religious writings, philosophical works, or superstitious chants as found in China, which often lead to suffering, poverty, and jeopardizing of life. Because the Bible can show humanity the true way to happiness, wealth, and longevity, it is one of the evidences of its revelation.

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<sup>1</sup>See Pss 119:14-16, 25, 57, 93, 103, 111, 127, 149, 162, 170, 175; John 5:24-25; Luke 11:27-28; Matt 19:16-22; Luke 10:31-40; John 15:11; 17:13.

God the Father (Fundamental  
Belief #3)

God the Father is the fount of every blessing. The Chinese idiom says:  
"When you drink water, think of its source." Searching for our roots is common to  
all human beings.

God is our happiness

"My spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Luke 1:47). As Mary, many  
Christians find their real joy in God, because they not only know their Creator but  
also their Redeemer.

God is our richness

"You, O Lord, are the portion of my inheritance and my cup" (Ps 16:5  
NKJV). In ancient time, one's inheritance was one's main source of wealth.

God is our life

"For with you is the fountain of life" (Ps 36:9). Here life means not only  
life at its best in this earth but life unending in the new heaven and new earth. God  
has promised that "through Me your days will be many and years will be added to  
your life" (Prov 9:11; John 17:3). Atheism, evolutionism, idolatry, and agnosticism  
lead only to vanity, a wretched and meaningless life. Consequently, mortal beings  
cannot offer a satisfactory answer to such basic issues as the origin of humankind, the  
certainty of our future, and the very meaning of our current existence. Meanwhile,

the only true living God can satisfy our human needs--the basic physical needs, security, belonging, certainty, loving and being loved, etc. (Jas 1:17; Ps 103:1-5). "Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him" (Ps 34:8).

God the Son (Fundamental  
Belief #4)

God the Son is the carrier of every blessing.

Christ is our joy

John the Baptist once claimed that Christ was like the bridegroom and he himself was the friend attending the bridegroom, when he listened to the bridegroom's voice. He became "full of joy" (John 3:29). This actually is a common experience for God's children. Because Christ became "a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering" (Isa 53:3) and drank the bitter cup for humankind (Matt 20:23), our "cup will overflow" (Pss 43:4, 23:5, Matt 16:17). Here the cup is a symbol of weal or woe.

Christ is our wealth

"Though He was rich" yet for our sakes "He became poor" so that we through "His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). Here "rich" denotes spiritual richness as well as richness in all other dimensions. The human being is body, mind, and soul all in one.

Christ is our life

Christ died on the cross so that we can live a long life (Matt 20:28; Rom 5:10,18; John 6:47-48, 1 Pet 2:24). This is redemption. Christ has paid the price for us on Calvary.

In Him, we have everything. Because "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all--how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?" (Rom 8: 32). "As it is written: No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor 2:9).<sup>1</sup>

The world, including China, denies the Savior and promotes a personal cult and atheistic humanism. Meanwhile, society cannot set a real example for people to follow. It also does not have a solution to sin and death. How appropriate to lift up Jesus Christ with all His promises in this chaotic world!

#### God the Holy Spirit (Fundamental Belief #5)

The Holy Spirit is the enlightener of every blessing (1 Cor 2:10-12). God promises to give the Holy Spirit to His children (John 14:16) "without limit" (John 3:34). We should not grieve the Holy Spirit of God (Eph 4:30).

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<sup>1</sup>Oftentimes this text is applied to the future, the new heaven and new earth; in fact, by the context it refers to Christ--God's unspeakable gift!

### The Holy Spirit is our happiness

We can have "peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17). One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is "joy" (Gal 5:22). He takes away our sorrow (Rom 8:26).

### The Holy Spirit is our wealth

God will make His people rich with all spiritual gifts (1 Cor 1:5; Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12-13; Eph 4:7-16). Christians have not received the spirit of the world but the Holy Spirit, that they may understand what God has freely given to them (1 Cor 2:6-16). In the Holy Spirit, Christians at least become spiritually wealthy people.

### The Holy Spirit is our life

Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. He sets us free from all evil desires and allows us to enjoy longevity and a life of freedom (1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 3:17; Gal 5:22-23) as well as eternal life (Rom 8:2,16; 2 Cor 1:22).

The Holy Spirit is the greatest blessing to God's people. Those who are greedy, as were Balaam (Num 23-24; Jude 11), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), or Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9-20), may be tempted to lie to or blaspheme the Holy Spirit. This would lead them to be "full of bitterness and captive to sin" (Acts 8:23). This will destroy everything, including the life here and hereafter, which is the opposite of happiness, wealth, and life that the Holy Spirit intends to give God's people.

When spiritualism, superstitions, the false Pentecost experience, and

materialism are rampant, this doctrine is important and relevant.

The Triune God (Fundamental Belief #2)

The triune God (2 Cor 13:14) is the source of our true happiness, wealth, health, and life.

God the Father is the fountain of our every blessing. He wants us to have all these blessings and has prepared a way for us to receive them.

Jesus is the way (John 14:6; 1:50-51; Gen 28:10-22). He is the carrier who takes away our sin, brings us every blessing, and leads us to God. In Him, "the path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day" (Prov 4:18). Meanwhile, "there is a way that seems right to a man but in the end leads to death" (Prov 14:12).

The Holy Spirit represents Christ and enlightens our soul to receive our Creator and Savior God, along with all the blessings and gifts which the triune God wishes to give us abundantly (Titus 3:4-7).

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness" (2 Pet 1:3). If our calling and election are sure, then as Peter said: "You will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 1:11). Since God is no respecter of persons, His promises apply to all, including the Chinese. The ancient Chinese possessed the concept of God. However, they considered only the king and emperor as God's son, but the Bible says that all of

humanity are the children of the Triune God. God created human beings for His glory and love.

The triune God also works together with one accord for our salvation as well as for our benefit on earth.

### The Doctrine of Man/Woman

In this section, creation and human nature are discussed. In God's creation, we see how God designed and provided happiness, wealth, and longevity for all human beings to enjoy. We know the essential difference between human beings and other animals is that humanity was created in God's image and enjoys freedom of choice. How tragic is the result of misusing this privilege--sorrow, fear, poverty, and death.

#### Creation (Fundamental Belief #6)

In the very beginning "God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). On the sixth day God "created man in His own image" (Gen 1:27). "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Gen 2:7). "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good" (Gen 1:31). Humanity did not evolve. Along with the material and physical aspects, humanity was made in God's image. Humanity was noble at the beginning of His creation.

Adam and Eve were the masterpiece and crown of God's creation. Those

things which appeared prior to and after their creation, such as light and air, land and sea, the sun and moon, grass and flowers, trees and fruit, fish and birds, and every kind of animal as well as the seventh-day Sabbath, all show God's glory and love, and exist for humanity's happiness, wealth, and longevity.

### Happiness

Eden was beautiful and made Adam and Eve joyful and content (Gen 2:8-9). "Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the East, in Eden." In fact, Eden in Hebrews means a delicate delight, a pleasure, a happy garden.

Not only was the garden beautiful, but it fostered beautiful harmony between God and Adam and Eve, between man and woman, between human beings and their environment and their own consciences. These perfect relationships made all creatures happy.

### Richness

In Eden, our first parents could not keep only the fertile and moist land, enjoy the bumper harvest, possess gold and precious stones, and have an abundance of food, but they also could increase in number, knowledge, and power (Gen 2:6-14,16,19; 1:28-29). How rich human life was in the beginning!

### A healthy and long life

In Eden there was no cold, no shame, no danger, no guilt, no sickness,



and no death. Adam and Eve lived a healthy lifestyle (Gen 1:29, 2:15). They ate the nutritious food and labored under the sunshine. They also enjoyed a happy family life. The Creator God "made everything beautiful in its time. He has set eternity in the hearts of men" (Eccl 3:11). Adam and Eve not only had an idea of eternity, but even possessed everlasting life before they sinned.

Humans have physical, mental, spiritual, and social dimensions and needs. Our first parents enjoyed both material and spiritual blessings. The great Creator and loving heavenly Father granted His children a happy and abundant life. The ancient Chinese used to offer the sacrifices on New Year's eve to thank "Heaven" or God for all the blessings they received during the year. Although many have given up this practice, some still practice it today.

#### The Human Nature (Fundamental Belief #7)

Men and women were made in God's image; they were living souls with high intellect, moral sense, and the privilege of freedom of choice (see Gen 2:7). This freedom differentiated human beings from other creatures on the earth.

The Bible says: "In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Gen 2:9). There was a possibility of choice.

And the Lord God commanded man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat it you will surely die" (Gen 2:16-17).

This was a very clear statement. Humans not only had freedom of choice, but also

would bear the responsibility and consequences of their choice. They could choose happiness or sorrow, abundance or destitution, life or death as the Israelites did before they crossed the Jordan and entered to possess it (see Deut 30:19-20). God did not create human beings as robots. By God's love He did not force us to accept what He would choose for us. But the righteous God did point out the consequences of wrong decisions and the dreadful results of disobedience.

Unfortunately, the everlasting paradise was lost after our ancestors made the wrong decision. They preferred to listen to the old serpent's insinuating lie rather than God's sincere words and command (Gen 3). Adam and Eve trusted Satan more than their God. They loved themselves over their Creator. This broke the intimate relationship between humanity and God, the harmonious relationship between individuals, and between us and nature. Sin (distrust of the Creator) and rebellion thus ruthlessly changed everything and its order. Human beings repeat their ancestors' mistake by abusing the freedom of choice. Instead of obeying God, they are against Him continually. Sorrow, poverty, sickness, and death thus take place everywhere and every day (see Gen 3:10-24).

After studying God's creation and humanity's nature in general, the freedom of choice specifically, and the current world situation, many emotions well up in my heart.

Generation after generation, the things that people longed for and strove for through countless disappointments had in fact existed at creation. We find there

the dignity of humanity, sacredness of life, equality of male and female, human rights and responsibilities, and the closeness of the marital and family relationship. We also recognize the healthy lifestyle--nutritious food, fresh air, clean water, healing sunshine, suitable exercise and labor, regular work, study, rest, preserving and developing the environment, and communicating with God, which contributes to a very happy, rich, and long life. The first two chapters of our human history tell how our ancestors spent their days before sin--then willingly disobeyed God and His command.

Today people are disappointed with man-made religion, philosophy, or "isms." Part of the world's population is grasping for its freedom; the other part, however, is abusing its freedom in its socio-economic and political dimensions. But all individuals have freedom of choice in the moral and spiritual sense. We appreciate the doctrine of men, the positivity of creationism, and free will which not only bring us back to our roots, but inspire us with the regained paradise through Jesus Christ. In Him, the lost have been found, the dead become alive, a useless life can be changed into a meaningful one, and the mortal enters eternity.

This is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom, or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this; that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord" (Jer 9:23-24).

Creationism is not just an academic argument in opposition to evolutionism. It is an attractive message and the remedy for our modern godless

people (Rev 14:6-7). It calls people back to God, the loving Father, back to family and friendships, back to nature, and back to a peaceful mind and healthy lifestyle.

Regarding human nature, in ancient times there were two schools of thought in China. The doctrines of Confucius (551-479 B.C.) and of Mencius (fourth century B.C.) believed that in the beginning, human nature was good. Meanwhile the Mohist School (770-221 B.C.) advocated that in the beginning, human nature was evil. Modern Chinese Communism does not accept the theory of human nature at all. Communists consider human nature as a fallacy put forward by the landlord class and the bourgeoisie, which deny the class character of human beings. Communists insist that in class society there is no human nature above classes. Everyone has only his/her own class nature.<sup>1</sup>

The Bible teaches that before the Fall, human nature was good (Gen 1:26-27; Eccl 7:29). After Adam and Eve chose to believe the serpent and distrusted their Creator, human nature turned to bad (Gen 3:1-13). Human beings possess a sinful nature, and it is easy to be tempted by Satan and thus trapped in an evil environment. God gave humanity promise and grace in Christ's redemption. Men and women must use their freedom of choice rightly in order to be saved.

Freedom of choice or free will is not a philosophical, theological discussion. Each day and everywhere each one of us faces it. Depending on the

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<sup>1</sup>"Human nature," Chinese-English Dictionary (Beijing, China: Commercial Publishing Co., 1978), 573.

right or wrong choice, we are led to true happiness, wealth, and a healthy, long life or sorrow, poverty, and death, individually or corporately.

### Doctrine of Salvation and Christian Life

"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick" (Matt 9:12).

Likewise, before individuals will seek a Savior, they must realize their illness of soul-sin. One of the functions of God's commandments is to let people know their spiritual disease and to lead them to find their salvation in Jesus Christ our Savior. In this section I discuss sin and God's commandments as well as the birth, life, work, death, resurrection, and second coming of Jesus Christ. I show the intention of the Lawmaker and how humanity was deprived of happiness, wealth, and longevity by the lawbreaker. I then present how Jesus by His whole life relates to the proposed motif and how He redeems what we have lost in sin by our sinful lives.

### Sin and God's Commandment (Fundamental Belief #18)

God's commandments are "good" (Rom 7:16). God gave them to protect humankind's welfare and liberty (Jas 2:12). By violating God's law, freedom was lost, as well as happiness, wealth, and longevity.

### Concerning happiness

Humankind not only was created by God after His image but was bought with a price (1 Cor 6:20) which was paid by Christ's life for our sin. "Everyone who

sins breaks the law, sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). This is one of the basic biblical definitions on sin.

As I look at God's law, the Ten Commandments, in the context of the theme I have adopted, I see the first four commandments: (1) the object of worship is the living and loving Creator God, (2) the right way of worship is avoidance of idolatry, (3) the appropriate attitude of worship is in fear and joy, and (4) the special day of corporate worship is on the blessed seventh-day Sabbath. These four commandments are the real basis of humankind's happiness (John 17:3; Pss 34:8; 119:2; Acts 17:26-34; Pss 119:57; 112:1; 84:4). Worshipping God brings happiness, and serving the Lord is true liberty. Because God has brought us out of "the land of slavery" (Exod 20:2) into the promised land, we become happy, free individuals.

#### Concerning wealth

The redeemed are not slaves, but free. The ancient Hebrews, when they left Egypt, reclaimed the property that once was theirs (Exod 12:35-36), and suddenly became materially rich. Likewise, God's children also can enjoy God's various gifts-including money for a noble purpose and for enjoyment.

During six days, God's children can labor to increase their social welfare and provide for personal needs. This is the lawful way to make money. If we steal or covet others' possessions in our heart or in deed, certainly miseries and poverty will be the result. "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (see 1 Tim 6:6, and

vss. 7, 9-10). "But godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Tim 4:8).

### Concerning longevity

The fifth commandment says: "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you." On the other hand, "You shall not murder," "You shall not commit adultery," and "You shall not give the false testimony against your neighbor" are related to respect for life, maintaining a healthy marriage, a good family system, and friendly interpersonal relationships. All these factors are necessities of health and longevity. They prevent pain, sickness, and death. Above all "now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

"Praise the Lord. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in His commands" (Ps 112:1). How true, good, and beautiful is God's moral law! When we violate this, the result is lost spirituality. Physical and moral death become arbitrators. Thus we have hope only in God's salvation.

### Origin of Sin and the Great Controversy (Fundamental Beliefs #7 and #8)

Before I discuss how sin came to this planet through our ancestors, I must trace the origin of sin back to heaven where it had already begun in the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

As I have stated before, when considering the political situation in China, I feel "the Great Controversy" motif is not appropriate. It would arouse unnecessary misunderstanding or suspicion, and finally cause trouble to God's cause.

However, I cannot totally ignore this important issue--the great controversy--in the Bible. If it is presented as just one facet among all the doctrines, I can then underscore the results of this controversy. This means "happiness, wealth, and longevity" or sorrow, poverty, and death.

After Adam and Eve sinned against God by following the old serpent's advice and ate the forbidden fruit and were facing death (Gen 3:1-14), God announced His plan of salvation. God told the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gen 3:15). God's first promise predicted the future great events. Instead of compromising or keeping peace with Satan, there has been great controversy between Christ and His people with Satan and his followers. The promised Seed came to win the battle by giving the serpent a fatal strike, even though He Himself had to suffer.

The Bible mentions that "ancient serpent called devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray" (Rev 12:9). He also deceived and caused one third of the angels to be driven out of heaven with him (Luke 10:18, Rev 12:9-10). Who is Satan? What is the origin of sin? We often apply Isa 14:12-15 and Ezek 28:13-18 to Satan and the origin of sin in heaven. Jesus also once said to the stubborn Jews:



"You belong to your father, the devil. . . . He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him" (John 8:44). The devil is a liar.

The best way to know someone is by his/her words and deeds. When we look at how the ancient serpent deceived Eve and Adam in Eden (Gen 3), tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11), mistreated Job in his hometown (Job 1-2), and what he did to the church (Rev 2, 12), we may gain some insights about Satan--how he waged war against Christ, His word, and His saints. First, he offers false joy, riches, and a long life in tempting God's children--even Jesus Himself (Matt 4:3). He seeks to provide physical satisfaction as well as mental achievements to meet humanity's needs and desires. Second, he determines to persecute God's people who do not yield to his temptation by taking away their happiness, prosperity, and life.

We thus clearly discern that Satan is the source of real sorrow, poverty, disease, and death, just as God, the Creator and Redeemer, is the fountain of true happiness, wealth, and life for His children.

On the Savior Jesus Christ  
(Fundamental Belief #9)

A turning point in our miserable human history took place when God's promised Seed arrived (see Gal 3:16). Jesus came on our behalf. He bought back what we lost. By His sorrow, poverty, and death He provided our happiness, richness, and a long life. His birth and life, and every stage of His life and each phase of His ministry are related to our benefits and blessings.

### His birth and life

"When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law" (Gal 4:4). "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance; Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim 1:15). By God's good will Jesus came for us.

Great joy. Jesus' birth is the good tidings. The angel proclaimed to the shepherds: "Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). His advent brought exceeding joy to the world.

Rich life. In having Christ, our life becomes rich, not only because "God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him" (Col 1:19) "who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), but "the grace of our Lord was poured out . . . abundantly" (1 Tim 1:14) on God's children. Moreover, since God "did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all--how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?" (Rom 8:32). Thus, for all who believe in Him "from the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another" (John 1:16).

Longevity. Christ gives eternal life to His people which even surpasses our wildest imaginings. "In Him was life, and that life was the light of men" (John

1:4). He said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Again He said to the bereaved: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25-26). So Christ came ushering a new epoch of happiness, wealth, and long life for all who believed.

#### His teaching and work

According to the Bible, Jesus' ministry included the following facets: (1) He preached the good news to the poor, (2) He recovered the sight for the blind and released the oppressed (Luke 4:18-19), (3) He taught the Beatitudes (Matt 5-7) and the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 13), (4) He brought comfort, satisfaction, peace, and longevity to His people (Matt 5: 3-10; Luke 6:20-21), (5) He performed His first miracle in Cana, bringing joy to the guests at the wedding feast (John 2:1-11), and (6) He healed the sick (Matt 4:23-25; Mark 5:21-23, 38-43; John 6:1-15; John 11; Mark 7:15; Matt 8:17) and raised the dead (John 11). These elements are related to our happiness, wealth, health, and long life in the physical as well as in the spiritual sense. He came to take away our sorrow, pain, poverty, sickness, and meaningless short life. He came to bestow on us every blessing of heaven (Matt 11:5).

#### His last week and death

Even at the end of Jesus' life journey on earth and as He was facing the

cruel cross, He still was concerned for our needs and blessings. How gracious is our Lord!

Concerned for happiness. The first part of His last speech before His crucifixion that is recorded in John 14-17 stated: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me" (John 14:1). A little while later He restated it (John 14: 27): "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete" (John 15:11; 16:22, 24). "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete" (John 16:24). Clearly enough His people's sorrows and joys in their life's journey were cherished in His heart.

Concerned for our richness. Jesus did not have worldly wealth to leave to His disciples, but He left that which His people most needed. He not only left His peace (John 14:27), but He showed them the way to the Father (John 14:6). He guaranteed them the Holy Spirit, another Comforter (John 14:16). He assured His return for the present time as well as in the glorious future. He promised to prepare a place for them in heaven (John 14:1-3; 16:19). He prayed for them (John 17) and made every provision for His disciples.

Concerned for our life. Jesus described our relationship with Him as the branches and the True Vine--a living connection. He portrayed the growth of our

spiritual life (John 15:2-5) as the process of cultivation, including the pruning work which He did. He spoke of our salvation and eternal life (John 17:3,12) which He protected and prayed for.

How wonderful is Jesus. What a wondrous blessing He bestows on His children! He cares for us on earth as in heaven. No single element of our true happiness, wealth, and health is overlooked by Him.

Even on the cross, Jesus was still concerned for our human needs and spiritual welfare. His soul was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death, yet He did not forget to ask for the forgiveness of the soldiers who crucified Him (Luke 23:34). He did not withhold a promise of eternal life for the repentant robber (Luke 23:43). He did not neglect the physical, mental, or spiritual needs of His mother, Mary, while He Himself was thirsting, in pain, being mocked, and struggling bitterly in His heart (John 19:26; Mark 15:29-36). The sequence of His seven words on the cross shows that Jesus always put others' welfare and happiness above His own suffering and personal needs. This is our wonderful Savior! His pain resulted in our joy, His poverty was exchanged for our richness, His death won our lives. No other religion or its founder can match this love. No other philosophy can fill the human empty heart.

#### His resurrection

His birth, His life and teaching, His death, and His resurrection and

ascension are all for our welfare on earth as well as in heaven. His glorious resurrection is so important to Christianity and His followers.

Great joy. Christ's resurrection brings to His believers great joy. Christ's resurrection from the dead shows that His redemptive work on earth was approved. Thus our sins have been forgiven and our relation with God is right (Rom 4:25;5:9-10). The load of sin has been removed as was His gravestone. We are free from the binding of sin and can rejoice.

Rich life. Even in this world, Christ's believers may have trouble, but they can still rejoice, for they know God will work out everything for good for all who love Him. An unfaded inheritance is waiting for us, as Peter said, that because of Christ's resurrection and our "new birth into a living hope," one day we will "enter into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade" (1 Pet 1:3-9).

Eternal life. In addition, we have hope for the future, "for as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Cor 15:17-23,26). Christ must reign and destroy the last enemy that is death. In front of Lazarus' grave He announced: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (John 11:25).

Because of Christ's resurrection, Christians not only have joy and meaningful lives in this world but also have hope at the last, when death will finally

be destroyed because Christ has overcome it. Believers are very blessed people. Christ "was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Rom 4:25); His life left us an example (John 13:15). His death reconciled us to God (Rom 5:11). His resurrection gave us a hope of being raised again (1 Cor 15:20-21). In Christ's life, death, and resurrection, God has provided the true happiness and an abundant and eternal life for the redeemed.

So in Christ's redemption, believers can rejoice for their past, present, and future on what the Triune God has done for them in the plan of salvation.

#### His Second Coming (Fundamental Belief #24)

When Jesus comforted His sorrowful and lonely disciples (John 14-16), His most encouraging promise was that He would come back to take us home.

#### Happiness

Christ's second coming is the most joyful event for God's people (Isa 25:8-9). Jesus assured us:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going (John 14:1-3).

Generation after generation, the believers "wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). "Blessed are all

who wait for Him" (Isa 30:18). "Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation" (Isa 25:9).

### Riches

At the end of the Book of Daniel, the angel told the prophet Daniel, "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance" (Dan 12:13) in Christ's Second Advent. The redeemed will be kings and sit on thrones with Christ (2 Tim 2:12; Rev 21:6).

### Eternal life

The Apostle Paul also said that when Christ comes, the believers will enjoy eternal life with Jesus forever (1 Thess 4:13-18). "May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it" (1 Thess 5:23).

Christ's second coming is the highlight and consummation of the plan of God's salvation. "The ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their head. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away" (Isa 51:11). By God's wholistic salvation in Christ, true happiness and abundant and eternal life will replace the sorrow, pain, poverty, sickness, and death on earth.



The New Earth (Fundamental  
Belief #27)

The Apostle John foresaw the new earth and new heaven. At that time, God "will wipe out every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev 21:3-5). The riches there will be exceedingly great (Rev 21:18-25).

In the Old Testament, Isa 35 and 65:17-25 also foretell of a glorious future of the jubilation of the new Jerusalem, which is generally used by Christians to depict the everlasting joy, richness, and long life in the new earth.<sup>1</sup>

The lost paradise was regained in Christ's redemption. Praise Him! Praise Him!

Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly  
Sanctuary (Fundamental  
Belief #23)

Between Christ's ascension and His second coming, Jesus, our High Priest, works in the heavenly sanctuary for His people (Heb 9:24). As His birth, death, and resurrection are all related to our happiness, wealth, and long life, His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is for us also (Heb 7:25).

Joy (Heb 4:15, Luke 18:7-8)

We have a great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God. "We do not have a

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 1:67-70; and idem, The Great Controversy, 675-676.

high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin" (Heb 4:15). As we have such a qualified and merciful High Priest, how can we not be happy? What kind of joy it is as we know that Jesus understands us and sympathizes with our situation! One day He also will judge the world with justice where His children often were mistreated by the unrighteous.

Richness (John 16:23-24; 1 John 5:14-15;  
Heb 4:16; 7:25)

Jesus prays for us. He has promised us that our requests will be answered. Through prayer in Christ's name we can open the heavenly treasure (see Rom 8:32-34). We should be proud of our spiritual account in heaven which Christ has signed His name to as a guarantee for us to receive from the heavenly bank.

Eternal life (Heb 10:19-23; 37-39)

Christ "had offered for all time one sacrifice for sin, He sat down at the right hand of God" (Heb 10:12) to be our high priest so our sins will be covered by His blood and righteousness. By faith we are saved spiritually and wait for the "the redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:23).

The doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary as depicted in the ministry of the loving Christ will become our great source of happiness, richness, and a healthy life.

### The Doctrine of the Church

Before Christ's second coming and the New Earth appears, Jesus is ministering for us as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. He also works through His church to gather His people to worship, to learn God's word, and to witness and serve the world. He especially calls the remnant church to carry the mission and spread the last-day message to the world.

The following only touches on one point to show the happiness and abundant life in God's household--the church (1 Tim 3:15).

#### The Church (Fundamental Belief #11)

Church (*ekklesia* in Greek) means "a calling out." God called out and elected a group of individuals from the world to be His people and gathered them into His church. As in ancient times, through Moses, Jehovah God called the Israelites out of Egypt. They entered into the promised land to worship Him and spread His knowledge and name on the earth (Exod 3:10).

#### Happiness

Freedom from slavery of sin and oppression, like the ancient Hebrews out of Egypt (Exod 20:2), is one of the greatest joys (Gal 5:1). In Paul's time, the Jews, especially the legalists, insisted that men must be circumcised, otherwise they could not be saved. Paul said that according to the glorious gospel, every individual is justified by faith in Jesus Christ. Righteousness came from faith in God's work

through our Savior but not from our own work or law-keeping (Rom 3:28). Christ has set us free to do His will.

Moreover, when sinners come out from the power of sin, they can worship God. Praising their Creator and Redeemer is a great blessing. "Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you" (Pss 84:4; 65:4; 112:1).

### Richness

God's people become the heirs of the King of kings and Lord of lords (Deut 4:20). In the future they will be considered as priests and kings (Rev 1:5-6).

Now Jesus is the head of the church body (Eph 4:15; Col 2:19). All church members around the world are as brothers and sisters in a large family (Heb 2:11-12; Luke 8:21; Matt 19:29). When two or three come together in Jesus' name, He has promised His presence. When they ask for anything with one accord, "it will be done for you by my Father in heaven" (Matt 18:19-20). Church members corporately have a great spiritual authority (Matt 18:18). All these riches belong to God's church on earth.

### Eternal life

The church is considered as "the household . . . of the living God" (1 Tim 3:15). "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity" (Ps 133:1). "For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore" (Ps 133:3) when Christians keep unity and love among them. Chinese Christians not only can share

their heritage of kindheartedness but can be inspired by God's love and respond to Christ's intercessory prayer (John 17:11-12). The divisions in Chinese Christian bodies should be resolved in His love and truth. Then many of God's people as well as others will say with David: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps 23:6).

### Summary

In this chapter I have presented a general view, the SDA view, and my personal understanding and arrangement of the Bible doctrines. I recognized the doctrine of revelation and doctrine of God to be the basis of the whole Christian theology and of all other doctrines. I also found that the sequence of SDA's doctrinal arrangement is close to the general arrangement except that the section of revelation is omitted. (However, the contents of the doctrine of revelation are under the doctrine of God and doctrine of the church.) As a reflection of denominational emphasis, a section on doctrine of Christian life is added between the doctrine of church and the doctrine of last things. To adapt to the Chinese situation, I have rearranged the sequence of these doctrines. I have placed the section of the doctrine of Christian life after the doctrine of salvation and before the doctrines of church and last things. I have also moved the section of doctrine of the church to the end.

Many suggested themes of the Bible do not fit in with the Chinese cultural and political situation. I have adopted the Chinese congratulations--"happiness,

wealth, longevity"--as part of the theme of biblical doctrines. Happiness, wealth, and longevity not only are universal needs but fit in with the Chinese mind-set. Especially, this motif is biblical. I have related earthly things with heavenly things, the known to the unknown, the Chinese context with biblical truth. I have presented most of the church's doctrines briefly within the context of the motif of true happiness, wealth, and longevity. This is Christ-centered and considers both present and eternal blessings, the material and spiritual life.

When over half of the world's population is living in sadness and poverty, and is under the threat of various diseases, and the rest of the world is infatuated with the temporary pleasures of sin, a wholistic salvation and biblical doctrine is a great contribution to the world. It becomes a light shining in the darkness that shrouds the world. We must lift up Jesus and His Good News to all people, including the countless Chinese who do not know Him and His Word. Thus this chapter presents the contextualized doctrines with a familiar Chinese expression as the theme.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE--  
PEOPLE AND GOD'S LAW

Introduction

Many reasons exist in the Chinese situation for dealing with the issue of law. During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods (770-221 B.C.) in Chinese history, there were two schools of thought--the Confucian school and the legalist school. They vigorously competed with each other.<sup>1</sup> The former one advocated love while the other emphasized discipline and law. Each of them has had a great influence on the common people's minds and lives. Even in the late sixties and early seventies in China, a serious debate took place between these two ideological systems.<sup>2</sup> Thus traditionally, law has been important in China.

Now there is a great need for an understanding of divine law. During the past four decades, under the Communist regime, the majority of Chinese people have not had the opportunity to know God and His law. At one time, the Chinese, especially the young people, did not know even that Christianity existed in this world.

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<sup>1</sup>Ching, 92.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 87-88, 93.

People often were tired of the numerous suppressive government regulations and later experienced the terrible results of anarchism in the so-called Great Cultural Revolution period (1966-76). Thus, the people do not know how to behave correctly. The old code of ethics has been criticized, while the new moral standard has proved to be of no avail. Does the Western culture which is coming back represent the norm of our human behavior? Many doubt it. The Chinese people stand at the crossroads. They need God's law as the light in the darkness.

In addition to this general need, most Christians in China have misunderstood the relationship between the gospel and the law, between faith and works. They either claim that God's law has been abolished in Christ or the law only belongs to the Jews, and Christians need not follow it. In this sense, they are losing the great opportunity to help the Chinese people in their confusion. Therefore, Christians need to learn God's immutable moral law so that they can shine in this ideological vacancy in China.

Meanwhile, by my observations, owing to the Chinese cultural and religious background as well as some unbalanced teachings of certain missionaries and native preachers, some old Chinese Adventists respect God's Ten Commandments but have an unhealthy tendency which emphasizes formal adherence, but not much about God's grace. By doing this, it is easy to slip into legalism. On the other hand, some new Adventists are influenced by other Christian bodies so that they are neglecting God's law. Thus Adventism in China is facing one of its most critical issues on how to deal rightly with God's law.



In view of this critical situation, I have a burden to present this topic, "People and God's Law," as a part of the doctrine of the Christian life. It suggests that if the Chinese people and Christians properly understand God's law and its relation to grace, and keep it with a sound attitude, they will attain true happiness, wealth, and long life.

God's law is a great subject in the Bible. In this chapter I first point out some improper relationships to God's law and their inevitable consequences. In the light of human history, including the current situation in China, these are (1) ignorance, (2) lawbreaking, (3) antinomianism, and (4) legalism. All these ultimately will lead to sorrow, poverty, and death. In the second part, I discuss the proper relationship with God's law and its desirable outcome. This kind of relation and attitude simply means to know and trust in God, rely on His grace, and obey His law. Such a Christian life harmonizes with God's law, is rooted in faith, and expresses itself in love. It remedies all the improper relationships to God's law and definitely will lead perplexed Chinese people to true happiness, wealth, and long lives. The third and last part of this chapter points out that God has given people valuable institutions. These are the "New Start" lifestyle, a sound marriage and family system, and the seventh-day Sabbath. All these institutions ordained before humanity's fall in Eden surely will help people to maintain and strengthen their relationship with God and His natural, civil, and moral law. In these institutions, the Chinese people also can retrieve some gems from the best part of their heritage.

They promote humanity's material and spiritual benefits which the Chinese are seeking and will, beyond their expectation, bring people God's blessings on earth as well as in heaven.

### Improper Relationships to God's Law and the Results

Before studying this issue, we should note that God's law is God's Word in its broadest sense. This is clearly seen in the use of different terms such as statutes, precepts, decrees, commands, promises, ordinances, instruction, judgment, and truth. These terms give the broad perspective of the law (Ps 19:7-9; Ps 119; Matt 5:17-20; John 15:7,11; 17:8,17). In this chapter, however, God's law is presented in its narrow sense and essentially refers to the Ten Commandments.

As we briefly look at our human history, the current world, and the Chinese situation, it is not difficult to find people having improper relationships to God's Law.

#### Improper Relationships to God's Law

##### Ignorance

Doubtlessly, the first improper relationship to God's law is ignorance. At least two situations currently exist among non-Christians as well as Christians in China.

The non-Christians. Most Chinese lack the chance to learn about God and

truth; they even do not know about their ancient cultural heritage and philosophies. They grew up and were educated under Communism, atheism, and evolutionism. They do not have any knowledge of God's literal law. This does not mean that certain functions of God's law, the sense of right and wrong, are not revealed in their hearts. It is just as the Bible says:

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them. This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares (Rom 2:14-16).

The Chinese say that everyone has a sense of compassion and they recognize that to murder and commit arson is utterly devoid of conscience. In addition, Confucianism and Buddhism also uphold moral rules. Taoism also has its ten commandments. Even the Communists promote their socialist virtues. All of them, however, do not know the origin of morality and life.

The Apostle Paul once asked the people in Athens who worshipped "An Unknown God" to know the true God, "to reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:23,27). Today non-Christians in China are waiting for someone to tell them the truth and God's law. Meanwhile, God wants them to open their minds to seek after Him. Certainly not all of them will believe in God, but some will accept God and His commands (see Acts 17:31-34) as we see it happening in China at this time.

For Christians. Many Christians, especially those who do not study the Bible by themselves, are ignorant of God's law. For many years there were no churches and Bibles in China. Christians follow their pastor's teachings and cannot differentiate between various laws in the Bible--the natural law, moral law, civic law, and ceremonial law. In particular, they confuse God's timeless moral law with the periodic ceremonial law (Rom 3:20,28; Gal 2:16; 3:10-11). In order to know the difference, we look briefly at these laws.

1. Natural Law. The Bible mentions some natural laws which include the health laws (Gen 1:5, 11, 16, 28, 30; 2:15; 8:22). They deal with the physical world; they are perpetual rules (Jer 31:35-36). The Taoists were also fond of searching the natural law, but they did not know the Lord of nature.

2. Moral Law. Some laws relate mainly to morality. The Decalogue no doubt belongs to this category. It applies to each individual and is a permanent law (Exod 20:1-17, Matt 5:18-19, 21, 27). Confucianism and Buddhism actively promoted the feudal ethical code and religious discipline. However, both miss the Ultimate Morality--the righteous and loving God.

3. Civic Law. Beside the two laws mentioned above, we can find many moral laws and regulations which were derived from the Ten Commandments. These were adapted to the ancient Israelite society as civil laws and penal codes. Most of

them were spoken by God through Moses and recorded in the Pentateuch. Thus sometimes they were called "the law of Moses" (Deut 31:9; Acts 13:39). When we use this law, we should be aware of different social, cultural, and religious backgrounds since these chiefly were given to the Hebrew people. In this sense, this part is not immutable; neither should it be applied to all people in all places with specificity. Ancient Confucianism and modern Communism stress a different kind of civil law. Unfortunately, people have many rules which lack the right motivation and the perfect pattern.

4. Ceremonial Law. If we read the Bible, especially the first section of the Old Testament, we must recognize there is a great portion of the law relating to the sacrificial system--the priest and feasts, the sacrifices, the sanctuary, and some religious rituals. This is often called the ceremonial law (see Rom 2:29; 7:6) which included instructions on the grand sacrificial system or institution. These laws typify Jesus Christ and God's whole plan of salvation. "When Christ died, He fulfilled the prophetic symbolism of the sacrificial system. Type met antitype, and the ceremonial law came to an end"<sup>1</sup> (Heb 9:10; 10:1; Gal 3:19, Dan 9:27; Deut 31:26).

Nevertheless, its wonderful message and truth remain; only its practice as a law has been abolished. In addition, circumcision was considered a part of the "law of Moses" (John 7:23) and was abrogated (Gal 5:2-4; 1 Cor 7:19). All conventional

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<sup>1</sup> Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . ., 243.

religions in China have their own ceremonial laws which cannot bring salvation and real peace to a yearning soul.

Whether those who do not have the knowledge of God's literal law as non-Christians or those Christians who have ignored the substantial differences between the immutable moral law and the periodic ceremonial law, the righteous God is willing to give those who are ignorant true knowledge and an opportunity to know Him and His Word. The loving Savior even "wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4). That atheists, Buddhists, and Confucianists have converted to Christianity is a good illustration.

#### Lawbreaking--lawlessness

Another improper relationship to the law is law breaking. The Chinese idiom describes some people as defying laws human and divine. Old Chinese Christians still remember those mad Red Guards, as they were burning the Bible, tearing down chapels, and beating unyielding believers, they loudly sang Mao's quotation, "Fear neither Heaven nor Earth"!

The lawbreakers here are those who purposely violated God's commandments as Paul mentioned in Rom 1. This refers to all godless and wicked men who suppress the truth by their wickedness (see Rom 1:18). Unlike the group of people stated above, they did have the opportunity or privilege to know divine law. However, instead of responding to this knowledge by worshiping God and keeping

His commandments, they gave glory to the idols and did evil as Paul said:

Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God. . . they have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless (Rom 1:28-31).

More terrible is this: "They not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them" (Rom 1:32). In this category Paul includes sexual abnormalities such as homosexuality (Rom 1:26-28). It is sad to learn that some Christian churches approve of this kind of conduct! For the idolaters, atheists, pagans, and God-haters, they might take different routes, but reach the same goal: sin against God and His "holy, righteous and good" law (Rom 7:12). However, the merciful God still is calling them: "Turn! Turn from your evil ways! why will you die?" (Ezek 33:11).

#### Antinomianism

The third improper relationship to law is antinomianism. The antinomians are members of a Christian sect who hold that faith alone is necessary to salvation. They advocate abolishing the moral law. They claim that Jesus Christ abolished the law on the cross. They like to unilaterally quote such verses from the Pauline epistles as: "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law"

(Rom 3:28). In China most churches believe this way. In the seminaries there, most teachers teach in this way also.

In fact, there is nothing wrong with Paul's statement. Men cannot be justified by keeping the law. The basic function of God's law is to condemn our sin, convince us, and lead us to the Savior (Gal 3:22,24; Matt 9:12-13). No salvation is contained in the law itself.

There is another reason that men cannot save themselves by keeping God's law. It is that before we were justified by faith in Jesus Christ and have adjusted our relationship with God by His grace, no one can actually observe the law. Paul said: "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so" (Rom 8:7). Since human beings already have sinned and are condemned by God's law, they cannot save themselves or harmonize their lives to God's law. The Chinese used to say that men are not saints and even the saints commit 30 percent of the mistakes.

However, we also notice that immediately after the statement of Rom 3:28, Paul said: "Do we, then, nullify the law by his faith? Not at all! Rather we uphold the law" (Rom 3:31). These texts have been purposely ignored or twisted by certain people, or, at least, they have misunderstood what Paul is saying here. To rely on the law for our salvation is wrong and repudiated by Paul, but it does not nullify the law, regardless of deeds or behavior as some people claim.

Another possible problem is that these Christians misunderstand the



essential difference between the unchangeable moral law--the Decalogue--and the periodic ceremonial law. The latter one was truly abolished on the cross. The former one, in contrast, was magnified and deepened through Christ's sacrifice, in the light of Jesus Himself as our Redeemer who paid the wages of our sin--death. The transgression of the law is sin (1 John 3:4). Jesus has freely paid the price for our sins. How can we keep on violating God's law and nail Him to the cross again and again?

If the antinomians claim that Jesus has abrogated the law, it is a most unfortunate mistake. According to the Bible, Christ not only wrote the Decalogue on Mount Sinai, He Himself also kept the law as no one else had done before (Ps 40:7-8; Heb 10:7,9; 5:9). For instance, with His last breath on the cross, Jesus still honored the fifth commandment, making loving arrangements for His mother (John 19:26-27; Ps 40:8). Christ must have understood what would happen to the law of God, so He announced beforehand that He did not come to abolish God's Word and law, but came to fulfill them. A warning was added to those who attempt to do away with God's law (Matt 5:17-19). Jesus here essentially referred to the Decalogue, because in vs. 21 He directly mentioned the sixth commandment and in vs. 27 the seventh commandment. He did not annul God's law; on the contrary, He magnified it by shedding new meaning on God's commandments and gave their spiritual application to His followers. Jesus thus fulfilled the commandments in this way.

On another occasion, a young rich man came to Jesus and asked how to

get eternal life. Jesus' answer was: "Obey the commandments." "Which one?" the young ruler questioned. (There were various commands or laws in his mind and he seemed to be confused.) Jesus clearly answered and pointed to the Decalogue (see Matt 19:16-22; Luke 18:18-23).

It is sad that some would ignore so clear a statement by Jesus Himself. For a Christian, the only safe way is to follow Jesus and listen to what He has said in the Bible, including what He taught on the law. Because many other denominations arrived in China before the SDA church and widely spread their views on God's law, bringing order out of this chaos is a challenging task.

### Legalism

Legalism is another extreme in dealing with God's law. Most of the Pharisees in Jesus' time were legalists. Some Adventists in China miss the point on the role of the law and do not use the law properly. They fall into this category. Some put the Sabbath above everything. Some even claim that the gospel is the law! Sabbath-keeping and not eating pork have become the landmarks of certain Adventists. Thus they are considered by some Christians as Jews and legalists.

Legalists strictly and literally adhere to the law. They believe that keeping the law earns them salvation as some Chinese Adventists do. Worse than this, they often give God lip-service and cause many to stumble by their deeds, which contradict their faith and teaching. For instance, after Paul mentioned the sins of the pagan

idolaters or the atheists, He immediately pointed out the serious problems of his native Jewish people. They relied on the law and bragged about their knowledge of the moral and ceremonial law (Rom 2:21-22,27), but violated them (Rom 2:23).

In addition, legalists also attend to trifles to the neglect of the essentials. For example, Jesus once told the Pharisees and teachers of the law in His day: "You give a tenth of your spices. . . . But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former" (Matt 23:23). This dangerous tendency still exists with the Chinese Adventists.

So far we have seen four kinds of improper relationships to God's law, namely, ignorance, lawbreaking, antinomianism, and legalism. In addition, a biblical understanding to them has been presented. A discussion of the results of these improper relationships to God's law follows.

### Inevitable Bad Results

God's law originally was designed for protecting and enhancing His creatures' happiness, wealth, and long life as stated above. Meanwhile, the enemy of God and humanity has undermined God's law in different ways. But Satan remains essentially the same, despite all apparent changes. He attacked and twisted God's law under the cloak of his concern for freedom, blessing, and the needs of humanity. Unfortunately, the world became his victim as well as his tool in hurting God and His

law. Whether pleading ignorance toward God's law or publicly violating it, whether speciously arguing that the Christian is free from keeping God's law or treating it legalistically, all are wrong and will lead to the same dead end--suffering, poverty, and death as history and daily Christian experience tell us.

As in Jesus' day, some Gentiles were ignorant of the true God, some overtly sinned, some like the Sadducees subtly challenged God's word, denying the resurrection (Matt 22:23-33), and some like the Pharisees rigidly adhered to unnecessary and over-elaborate formalities but neglected the substantial meanings of God's commandments (Matt 15:1-9). What Jesus told them was: "You are in error." Why? Because they did "not know the Scripture or the power of God" (Matt 22:29).

In the nineties, the situation in China is the same for all non-Christians, as well as for some Christians and Adventists. Either individuals are much like atheists and evolutionists who do not know God's law at all or they are much like many Christians who do not really understand the Bible. Those who are ignorant and part of the antinominians are under the former category, not knowing the Bible, while the legalists or the lawbreakers err because they do not grasp God's power in His word and commands (Luke 1:37, Rom 1:16). They prefer to follow their own way and adopt man-made ideas instead of following God's word and law (Isa 55:1-2; Matt 15:3, 8-9) or they do not realize and accept God's grace and gospel, which is the power of God (Isa 55:3,8-11; Rom 1:16). Every human invention in dealing with divine or sacred things--such as trying to keep God's law to earn salvation--will go

wrong; and the results definitely will be serious. We examine these positions separately as follows:

### For the Ignorant

The idea of "ignorance is bliss," as certain Chinese have claimed, does not stand. God does not practice obscurantism. He created human beings after His own image as living souls with sense, judgment, and wisdom. Ignorance of the law excuses no one. Ignorance to the civic law or God's law is the same. For example, one who ignores the traffic laws will get in trouble. Even though the loving and just God may leniently treat those who have not had the chance to know His law (1 Tim 1:13-15; Rom 5:12-13; 2:12-16; Luke 12:48), ignorance of God's laws will damage our health and leave us narrow-minded. However, the impartial God loves the ignorant. He provides opportunities for them and calls them in different ways. "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man He has appointed" (Acts 17:30-31). God will judge the world through Christ according to His law and gospel (Jas 2:12; Rom 2:16; 2 Tim 4:1-2). One of the most popular Chinese idioms is this: "Good will be rewarded with good, and evil with evil. If there were no retribution, the judgment hour has not come yet." But regrettably, most modern Chinese do not know the true God and the majority of Christians do not treat His law properly.

### To the Lawbreaker

The Bible tells us that originally all sorrow, poverty, sickness, and death are from sin against God and from disobeying His Word (Gen 3:8,10,16-24).

The murderer, Cain (Gen 4:1-15), the furious avenger, Lamech (Gen 4:23-24), the wicked antediluvians (Gen 6:1-7, 12-13), the idolatrous builders of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9), the licentious Sodomites (Gen 19:1-9), the false and covetous prophet Balaam (Num 23-24), as well as the apostate Israelites all belonged to this group of lawless people. Nowadays it is rapidly becoming a general portrait of the current world's residents. In recent years the crime rate in China has greatly increased, in particular, among the young people. "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Rom 3:10). No matter whether people live in the Western countries or in Asian societies, all are sinners and "fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). However, this type of lawbreaker refers not to the common, sinful mortals but to the unrepentant, deliberate sin against God. These are called the wicked. "There is no peace," says God, "for the wicked" (Isa 57:21) and "for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil" (Rom 2:8-9). Physical, moral, and spiritual perdition is their lot. "Sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).

### To the Antinomians

There are some who may be considered as sincere Christians but are sincerely wrong in the doctrine of law and gospel, faith and works. There are some who really do not know what they claim, but only follow others or what their pastor or church has said. They need to humble themselves and search the Bible for evidence of what they believe. Most likely they will be led to the fountain of truth and come to know how important and precious is God's law.

There is another totally different situation of ignorance. It is the result of those who have refused to love the truth and so be saved. "For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie, and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness" (2 Thess 2:11-12). The terrible result of this antinomianism since Lucifer's rebellion (see Isa 14:12-15; Rev 12:7-12) causes us to tremble to these very days. Sin reigned; happiness, abundance, and eternal life all have gone. Sorrow, hardship, and death come upon us all in our life journey. Disobeying God's Word and law, instead of little consequence, is a dreadful thing. It is true when the Chinese say that a single slip may cause lasting sorrow.

### To the Legalist

Self-righteousness and formalism are remarkable signs of legalism. They are not only the cause but also the effect. Self-righteousness leads to blaming others,

and formalism causes a false estimation of self and of others. These often cause division in the church, as has happened in certain areas of China. Legalists claim they are the only orthodox Christians while others are wrong. It seems that all the truth is in their side. But the most fatal result is separation from God. The legalists become as dry bones in Christ's body.

If we say the prodigal son in Luke 15 represents common sinners in the world, then the older son indicates strong legalism in the image of the ancient Jews who looked down on other nationalities and professed themselves to be God's elected nation and peculiar people.

like the older son in this parable, the legalists keep the law in order to earn favor. They do not appreciate the happy life which they have enjoyed; they spend their lives without any real meaning only to keep a form of religion. They do not recognize their son/daughtership of God but look on themselves as hired servants, who have no way out. Modern Adventists and Christians still can descend into the pitfall of legalism as the ancient Israelites did. Instead of having an abundant life in Christ, they spend a dry, empty, and poor life by themselves. Meanwhile they are self-righteous and patronize others.

God intended to bestow all His blessings, which include happiness, prosperity, health, and long life, to all His people who will listen and keep His law rightly. But instead of following God's Word and laws, we often prefer to walk in our own way led by our carnal hearts. Many Christians (including Adventists) take



the wrong approach to God's law and thus receive the evil consequences--sorrow, poverty, and sickness, and are deprived of eternal life. The picture of the church in Laodicea vividly presents the pitiful, blind situation of legalists.

It does not ever need to be like this; there is a brighter side as is shown below.

### Proper Relationship and Attitude Toward God's Law

How do we change the improper relationships toward God's law? It would be better to bring in the light than to dispel the darkness itself. This section introduces some proper remedies, taking a right attitude to replace the wrong one. First we need to match the remedy to the problem. Let ignorance be replaced by knowing; let trust, obedience, and love replace the deliberate breaking of God's law.

#### To Know

To know God and His divine law is essential. Ignorance is regretful and knowledge is important. Lack of knowledge eventually may lead people to destruction (Hos 4:6). On the other hand, knowledge of the only true God and Jesus Christ is eternal life (John 17:3).

To those who do not know God and His law, we must first provide opportunities to know the only true God and His Word--the Bible. The atheists, the evolutionists, and the many young students in China desperately need this.

To those who are lawbreakers, the problem is not a mere knowledge of God and His law. These people break the law not because they do not know the law, but because they are not willing to obey the law. They prefer to follow their evil desires and carnal minds. They also follow the ways of the world and the evil spirit to fight against God and His Spirit. As Paul said, they "were dead" in their transgressions and sins (Eph 2:1-3).

Because they obstinately stick to a wrong course, a shout is needed to warn them, to wake them up to escape disaster at the last moment. They need to know God's justice and judgment here and hereafter. Paul said: "For those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger" (Rom 2:8). But mere biblical knowledge and warning is insufficient. They need to know and experience God's great love, incomparable mercy, and wonderful grace in Jesus Christ (Eph 2:4). What knowledge alone cannot do, love may do by melting their hardened soul and fulfilling its mission.

There are four precepts sincere antinomians should be taught:

1. They should know the difference between God's immutable law--the Ten Commandments--and Moses' so-called temporary law, including the ceremonial law. The former one remains as Jesus claimed; the latter one was abolished on Jesus' cross.

2. They need to know the characteristics, role, and function of God's Decalogue. Let them know it is good, holy, righteous, royal, and the "law of liberty"

(Rom 7:12; Jas 2:8,12). It reflects God's loving character and just requirements (Ps 119; Matt 22:39-40). God's law convinces our sinfulness and condemns us. It then leads us to find and accept Jesus Christ as our Savior (Rom 3:20; Gal 3:22-23; Rom 7:23-24). In God's final judgment, we will be judged according to God's commandments (Jas 2:12; Rev 21:8).

3. They need the true knowledge of the right relationship between the gospel and the law, between grace and truth, and between faith and works. All these are inseparable and needed: the law convinces people they are sinners, the gospel tells that God's Son, Jesus Christ, has died for sinners and will give everlasting life to all who believe in Him (Rom 7:7; John 3:16; Rom 1:16). People need God's grace to do what the truth tells them to do (John 1:14,17; 2 Pet 3:18). Faith is like the spirit or root, while works are the body or flower and fruit (Jas 2:26, Luke 3:8-9).

4. They need to be told that obedience is necessary (Matt 7:21,26; Rev 22:12; Heb 5:8-9), as well as what Jesus said about God's commandments (Matt 5:18-19).

Three things legalists should be taught to remedy the situation are:

1. They need to know that "no one will be justified before God by the law" (Gal 3:11). One cannot be saved by keeping the law. Humanity by itself cannot keep God's law (Rom 3:21-24).

2. They need to know the Triune God's work--God's love, Jesus' grace and righteousness, and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. Then the Christian's faith

and the spirituality of God's commandments must be pointed out. Our own insufficiency also should be stressed (Matt 5:20).

3. They need to understand the essence of God's law--the love relationship between God and humanity, between men and their fellowmen (Matt 5:20; 19:16-22).

Whether non-Christians, antinomians, legalists, or even lawbreakers, all should be provided the "true knowledge" of God and His law and grace (Rom 10:2).

New believers need to: (1) keep a spirit of the "fear of [the] Lord"--because it is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge (Prov 1:7, 9:10), (2) recognize their own insufficiency and humbly pray for wisdom and knowledge (Jas 1:5-6) which God has promised to give them, (3) receive the "message with great eagerness" and examine "the Scriptures every day" to see what is true, and (4) choose to do God's will in His Word and law (John 7:17)--thus they will be able distinguish between the Lord's teaching and humanity's inventions.

This kind of spirit, attitude, and action will lead them to know God's truth and law and its relationship with God's grace in the Bible. Once they really know God and His good, just, and holy law as well as the law of liberty, the experience of the Psalmist which is expressed in Ps 119 will be repeated in their lives. They will rejoice in God's law (Ps 119:16,35). They will consider God's commandments more than gold and silver or great riches (Ps 119:72,14). They will look to God's Word as their life (Ps 119:25,50). But for those who close their eyes lest they be enlightened, there is little hope except they strike out on a new path (Matt 13:14-15).

### Trust, Obey, and Love

The Bible as well as the Christian's experience tells us the relationship of people to God's law is not just a knowledge problem. It is a deeper relational problem between God and men, sinner and Savior, the Heavenly Father and His children. If we would really know and obey God's Word, His commandments, we must solve the problem of faith or trust. Real faith means to grasp and claim His promises and to obey God's law in His grace. Living faith must express itself in love (Gal 5:6). The following illustrates the issues of trust, obedience, and love and how they connect us to Jesus Christ our Savior.

#### Faith or trust

Before Paul knew Jesus and accepted Him as the Messiah, he desperately struggled with sin. He recognized the law as "holy, righteous" and agreed that "the law is good" (see Rom 7:12,16). But he had this kind of experience:

What I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do . . . . I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing (Rom 7:15,18-19).

For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law (Gal 5:16-18).

Paul thus cried bitterly: "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24). Only after Paul believed in Jesus Christ did he shout joyfully: "Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (see Rom 7:7-

25). Paul was set free from bondage and condemnation. This same experience happens to those who have the knowledge of God's law, but cannot keep it and always violate it. Now in Christ all can be "free from the law of sin and death" and "submit to the law of the Spirit of life" (Rom 8:1-2).

As the Bible says: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

Jesus said further: "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). "It is for freedom that Christ set us free" (Gal 5:1). "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17). Like Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is truth and makes men and women free. James in his book repeatedly mentioned the perfect law that gives all of us freedom (Jas 1:25, 2:12).

Thus, the Triune God, His truth, and His law itself, all intend to make people free. To those who believe it, to those who trust God's love and Christ's righteousness instead of human invention, poor efforts, and painful struggle, it will become reality--they will be free men and women. Belief or trust in God and Jesus Christ is the first step to secure our freedom from the power of sin and to follow God's law.

Those in Christ are neither under the condemnation of the law (Rom 8:1) nor above the requirements of God's law (1 Cor 9:21). By God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, they are walking in the law and His way (Rom 6-8). God's law is

not just letters on two stone tablets, but is vividly impressed on each mind. God made a new covenant with the new convert: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17). Thus, those who trust God and believe in Jesus Christ can find happiness, richness, and a meaningful long life. They are unwilling to yield to the power of sin and have freed themselves from the condemnation of the law by justification of Christ and their repentance. They are able to willingly, lovingly harmonize their lives with God's commandments in His grace.

#### Work or obedience

Before Jesus gave the promise of the Holy Spirit who will lead us into truth and set us free, He said: "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). In the Great Commission Jesus asked His disciples to teach the hearers of the gospel "to obey everything" which Jesus has commanded. Obedience must follow faith. Trust will lead to obedience.

The difference between Christians and other religious people is that the Christian's obedience is based on trusting in God and believing in Jesus Christ and love for his/her Creator and Redeemer. The Bible indicates we cannot have a faith without deeds. Conversely, we cannot have work without faith or prior to faith. Faith and trust are the roots; works and obedient lives are the flowers and fruit.

Faith and works, and trust and obey verify each other. If either is

missing, it will hurt the other. The healthy relationship of "trust and obey" is the best solution to the problem of antinomianism and legalism, as well as ignorance and lawbreaking. People who fail to keep God's law, either due to ignorance or self-reliance, need faith in Christ. People who neglect or openly violate God's commandments need to obey it in God's grace which will free them from the power of sin and condemnation of the law.

Distrust and disobedience to God's Word has led humankind into misery, poverty, and shortness of life. Only trusting in God and obeying His commands will bring happiness in Jesus. Through Solomon God said: "My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity" (Prov 3:1-2).

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones (Prov 3:5-8).

Those who trust God and obey His law will be led into happiness, richness of life, and healthy longevity.

## Love

Why does God free us from the power of sin and the condemnation of the law? We are saved to serve and love. The Apostle Paul advised: "You, brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command:



'Love your neighbor as yourself" (Gal 5:13-14). Those who believe and trust God receive the freedom to obey Him--to serve God and serve one another in love. In Jesus Christ "the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself in love" (Gal 5:6). "Now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13; Rom 5:1-11). The Chinese once were nurtured with peace and love. During the past decades, however, the people in China were indoctrinated with a class struggle in a mood of distrust and disrespect. Though severely tried, only those Christians who trust, obey, and love God and His truth remain. Trust makes people happy, love enriches the daily life, and obeying God's law yields health.

In general, knowledge leads to faith (Rom 10:14), faith to works, and works are expressed in love. This process of a knowing, believing, trusting, obeying, and loving relationship between God and humanity is the solution to all problems of God's law--ignorance, lawbreaking, antinomianism, and legalism. It is also the way to free human beings from sorrow, poverty, and death and to enter into happiness, wealth, and a meaningful long life. The Chinese people long for these blessings.

#### Some Valuable Institutions Related to Our Daily Lives

Once people solve the basic problem of a spiritual relationship with God and His law, some valuable institutions ordained by God at the very beginning of human history are presented and will be appreciated. These are a healthy lifestyle, a good marriage and family life, and regular worship of God through weekly Sabbath

observance. Conformity to God's natural law, civic ordinance, and moral law also maintains and strengthens our sound relationship with God and His commandments. Acceptance of these institutions will produce and enhance a human being's joyfulness, abundance, and longevity and prevent unnecessary grief, poverty, and sickness.

China is a great country with a long civilization. The Chinese people were cultivated and nurtured by her conventional philosophies and religious concepts. They were vigilant in preserving their good health and highly esteemed the stability of the family and the moral values of the people. However, all these values came under fire for the sake of feudalism and capitalism. In order to pour out the dirty water, they also threw out the baby with the washwater. Now the Chinese people need not only modernization but a renewal of these values. Above all, these blessed institutions will lead trustful and obedient people through Jesus to the fountain of every blessing--God and eternal life. The Chinese who want to pursue true happiness can find satisfaction here. These are not man-made gimmicks but a grand system from Heaven.

#### NEW START--A Healthy Lifestyle

A new lifestyle will greatly contribute to physical as well as mental health. Believers are born again not just in a spiritual sense but will demonstrate a new beginning in their daily lifestyle (John 3:6-8; Rom 6:4). Whether they eat or drink or whatever they do, they do it all for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). They will pay

attention to Nutrition, Exercise, Water, Sunshine, Temperance, Air, Rest, and Trust in God. God, by His love and redemption, will restore in us His image in Christ which includes all physical aspects. We need these natural remedies. Ellen G. White in her Ministry of Healing (p. 127) mentioned "pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power--these are the true remedies." According to this instruction, which includes eight important elements of health, Weimar Institute of California State and Wildwood Hospital of Georgia State highly recommend this NEW START lifestyle.

In fact, all these elements God already had prepared in His creation week. In Gen 1, in the first six days God provided light, air, water, food, sunshine during the day, night for rest, and suitable work and labor (Gen 2:15). Above all, trust in the loving Creator God is the most valuable. Now, even though we cannot see God face to face, we still can listen to Him and talk with Him by reading the Bible and through prayer in our daily devotional life.

This world is full of air and water pollution, fatal diseases, and threatening ecological problems. China, as a country moving toward industrialization and modernization, is increasingly facing these troubles. If these eight elements of NEW START can be applied to our daily lives, very good results will be produced. This is one of the aspects of God's salvation also. Redemption actually is re-creation, not only affecting our spirituality but also our physical and mental conditions.

### Marriage and Family System

God ordained marriage and the family system for the happiness and abundant life of human beings. It is part of the law of life. God Himself officiated at the first wedding and blessed Adam and Eve with rulership on earth. No other creature shares our privilege and honor as children of God who were created after God's image and likeness; no other creature has been given the rights and authority as God's agent and ruled over the whole planet; no other creature shares our intimate relationship with God and between husband and wife. As God brought the bride Eve to Adam, the first bridegroom said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23). They were joined together as one flesh. In China people used to congratulate the new couple to live to a very old age in conjugal bliss.

As we observe the current family situation with its startling divorce rate (even in a country with such a noble heritage as China's), we can admire the first marriage and family in Eden. We should not despair, however, for by God's grace and having faith in Him, we can still build honorable families in light of God's promises. As Christ becomes the Lord of our family, happiness, a fruitful life, and longevity will return.

### Sabbath Institution

Not until God created Adam and Eve did God say "it was very good" to all His creation (Gen 1:31). Not until the seventh-day Sabbath did God announce the

completion of His creation week (Gen 2:1).

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done (Gen 2:2-3).

If we say all those things created before Adam and Eve during the first six days were for humankind, then the Sabbath following man/woman's arrival also was ordained for human beings. Jesus, once the Co-creator, understood this very well. He said: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). Before Adam and Eve worked in Eden, God wanted them first to enjoy the Sabbath rest with Him. They first listened to God, learned from the Creator, and communed with the Heavenly Father. With full spirits, energy, satisfaction, noble ideas, and inspiration, we can then work to serve people. If we lack real peace and rest in body as well as in soul, we become anxious, wretched, and weak. If we reserve this day to worship God, to enjoy fellowship, and to be close to nature, one seventh of the week will yield us healthy bodies, relaxed minds, and joyful hearts to deal with the rest of the week. People who live in a country such as China, with its current economic upsurge, especially need peace in their soul and rest from their work through a knowledge of their Creator and loving heavenly Father.

A healthy lifestyle, a good marriage and family system, and Sabbath observance were all ordained and blessed by God in Eden. If we honor these, they will become a great blessing to our fellow human beings. China, as a developing

country, pursues its modernization. While the old philosophy and traditional religious and value system have been challenged, and the once-dominating Marxism and Communism have lost their attractiveness, there is a great void in values and patterns of behavior. Even though the Chinese government is aware of the impact of Western ideology, the negative aspects of Western society still erode the Chinese lifestyle, which lead people to seek wealth regardless of their health, or moral and spiritual life. In light of this, these institutions ordained and given by our loving Father of humankind are greatly needed by the Chinese to provide true happiness, wealth, and a long life.

### Summary

Currently, China is a Communist country and urgently needs true teaching about the law. Most people do not know the true God and His divine law. People lost the best part of their heritage and suffered at the first from numerous restrictive regulations. Later they braved the anarchism of the Cultural Revolution. Suddenly they were faced with the return of Western ideology. People do not know how to adjust their lives and conduct themselves nobly in this absence of a moral norm. The Chinese people need God and His law as a guiding light in their perplexity.

Most of the Protestant churches in China either misunderstand God's law and the relationship between gospel and law, faith and works, or completely reject God's law. They themselves not only slip into antinomianism, but miss the great

opportunity to make a contribution in this morally chaotic period.

Meanwhile, some Adventists still apply God's law legalistically, and some leaders, with their new converts, are under the influence of other Christian bodies and neglect God's law. The Chinese church needs to know God's law and to use it properly.

In light of the current situation in China and the Chinese church as stated above, four major improper relationships between people and God's law have been found. These are (1) ignorance, (2) lawbreaking, (3) antinomianism, and (4) legalism.

These four attitudes or improper relationships cost us our happiness, wealth, and a healthy long life on earth and an everlasting life in the future.

The remedy for the ignorant is simply to let them know God and His grace and law. For those who have violated or abolished God's law, or keep it by their own efforts, let them trust, obey, and love God and His truth. By this they truly can be freed from the power of sin and the condemnation of God's law as well as to be led into the right relationship with God, to harmonize their lives with His law and to live for service and love.

Before man's fall in Eden, God had already ordained three precious institutions for humankind's happiness, richness, and long life. These are the healthy NEW START lifestyle, a sound marriage and family system, and the blessed seventh-day Sabbath rest. These institutions strengthen people's relationship with the Creator,

their heavenly Father, and harmonize the relationship within society and the family.

In fact, these institutions conform with God's moral, civil, and natural law as well as prevent the serious consequences of their violation. This is an attractive and admirable life to spend in this chaotic, troublesome world. Thus, God's divine law will be a practical contribution to China and the Chinese people.



## CHAPTER SIX

### STEWARDSHIP OF MONEY

#### Introduction

What is the most attractive and popular topic in current China? It is not class struggle or serving the people. Those who still insist on one of these topics are considered out-of-date. "Making money" and "getting rich" ring everywhere. Especially in recent years, many people have put forth great effort into becoming wealthy.

At one time, money and capitalism in China were shunned and criticized. The landlord and the rich peasant were at the top of the list of enemies. To be bourgeoisie was a shame in light of the ideal of dividing and sharing equally within Communism. In the fifties, we in China pledged that we would never embrace capitalism. Every single desire to become rich was suppressed or concealed. But in less than half a century, the pendulum has swung. Making a fortune seems the highest aim of most of the populace, which includes the Communists, cadres, and the military. No other motivation is stronger than money. A thirst for money drives many teachers and young students to give up school and turn to business. If a patient does not present costly gifts or a large amount of money to the surgeon, he or she

finds it difficult to receive the operation promptly. Gambling houses can be found everywhere, and in particular, in the countryside. Streets and lanes are flooded with imitations. The dying embers of prostitution are glowing again. Drug dealers run great risks to make big money. At one time all such business had almost come to an end. Needless to say, if either Confucius or Mao Ze-dong were alive now they would be shocked at seeing "the god of wealth" roaming through China. Confucius' adage-- "With coarse food to eat, water for drink, and a bent arm for a pillow,--even in such a state I could be happy, for wealth and honor obtained unworthily are to me as a fleeting cloud"<sup>1</sup>--seems ridiculous for most of the Chinese people.

Christians in China do not live on an isolated island. Like many others, they are tempted and challenged on this issue. For the Adventists, Sabbath-keeping becomes a test in the light of losing one day to earn money. Meanwhile, we recognize that the situation of this world is a polarization of wealth and poverty. China is gradually reaching this point. As the Chinese idiom says: "Behind the vermilion gates meat and wine go to waste while out on the road lie the bones of those frozen to death." Reflecting on this phenomenon, people once again wonder: What causes people to be poor? How can one become prosperous? Is money genuinely good or sheer evil? Many people, including Chinese Christians, hold different opinions and to some extent are confused.

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<sup>1</sup>The Analects of Confucius, vol. 7-15. trans. William Edward Soothill, 2d ed. (New York: Paragon Books Reprint Co. 1968), 345.

Since my proposed theme for biblical doctrines is "The Way That Leads to True Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity," it is necessary to define richness and point out the ways to achieve wealth. The Chinese people are famous for their business and management skills. Their religious approach tends to be practical rather than theoretic.

In view of this, in this chapter I present the biblical view on wealth and our proper relationship to money.

After an introduction, the first section points out God's ownership and our stewardship. This understanding is the premise of this study. Based on it, I discuss the nature of money. The second section discusses why people become poor and how they can become rich since the issue of wealth and poverty are as closely related as two sides of a coin. The third section points out the usefulness and limitations of money itself, letting the Bible shed its insights on this since money has become such a big issue in China. The fourth section shows how Christ wonderfully makes us the truly rich people in the last days. Finally a summary is given.

#### Our Stewardship in the Light of God's Ownership

God's ownership and men's stewardship is the biblical premise with regard to wealth. Based on this understanding, we can rightly know the nature of money. Money is not necessarily good or evil. It depends on the means by which individuals get it and the ways they use it. Money can be used by God as a blessing to men, and by Satan as a curse to the world.

### God's Ownership of Wealth

God is the Creator. "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" (Pss 24:1; 95:4-5; Prov 3:16). Above all, human beings were created by Him after His own image, thus we belong to Him. Our life and everything we have, including money, are borrowed from Him.

As the Israelites were building the second temple, they worried about resources. God assured them: "The silver is mine and the gold is mine" (Hag 2:8). God is the owner of all wealth.

On another occasion, God, through His servant Moses, reminded the ancient Israelites: "You may say to yourself, 'My power and strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is He that gives you the ability to produce wealth" (Deut 8:17-18). Men are ever tempted to think they create wealth. But never forget God's ownership! God is the Creator, and moreover, He also is our redeemer. He has paid for our very existence (1 Cor 6:20).<sup>1</sup>

### Our Stewardship of Wealth

God's people are considered as His stewards (1 Cor 4:1). "Steward" means one who manages another's property, finances, or affairs. God's people are

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<sup>1</sup>1 Cor 6:20 in Chinese reads: "You were bought at a great price."

entrusted as the keepers, supervisors, or administrators to manage God's spiritual things as well as the material possessions on earth. In this chapter I chiefly discuss the stewardship of money.

The Old Testament tells us this: even prior to the creation of Adam and Eve, God already intended that men would rule over everything on earth as His agents or delegates (Gen 1:26, 28; 9:1-3).

In the New Testament, Jesus again emphasized this concept of stewardship (Matt 24:45-51; 25:14-30). The Apostle Peter also exhorted the Christians to faithfully administer "God's grace in its various forms" (1 Pet 4:10). Wealth doubtlessly is one kind of God's grace. We have the privilege to be God's stewards.

In addition, this privilege carries a responsibility. The Bible says: (1) every steward is to be faithful to his or her master and what he/she is entrusted with (see 1 Cor 4:2); (2) every steward will be tested--"whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much" (Luke 16:10); (3) every steward finally will give an account to his or her master according to the principle: "Who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48); and (4) "if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?" (Luke 16:11).

The sound concepts of stewardship obviously are based on knowing and accepting God's ownership. In this sense, God's ownership and humanity's stewardship are closely related to each other. Confucius recognized that riches and

honors are determined by Heaven. When he arrived in the state of Wei, he was impressed by the flourishing of its population. Someone asked what must be done after the population has flourished? He answered: make the people rich. "What must be done after making them rich?" "Educate them," was the answer. Moses was to instruct the ancient Israelites to remember God's ownership and share their blessings. Where are today's educators and prophets? The Chinese people want them; the world needs them.

### The Nature of Wealth

Regarding the nature of wealth, many people in this generation look to money as their god. Westerners tend to consider money as omnipotent. In modern China, wealth becomes the final arbitrator. Everything is measured by money. A common Chinese saying goes like this: "If you have money, then you can command the ghost to grind the mill for you." This expression reflects the popular belief that riches will lead to happiness and a long life. The ancient Chinese idea that men or women should be praised by superior conduct, not by wealth, seems outdated.

Meanwhile, there are some people who consider wealth as evil, as the devil, because of the depressing events of this world and the corruption of Chinese society. They focus on the negative side of wealth, which is monopolized by a handful of people and which results in sadness, poverty, and sickness. What does the Bible say about money?

### Is Money Good?

We recognize that wealth and prosperity are one of the blessings of God, a kind gift from Him, and a form of His grace. Instead of considering it as evil as some would claim, we should consider it as good. According to the Bible, this material world and everything within it are God's creation and were perfect at the very beginning of creation.

In fact, nowhere in the Holy Scripture does it say that earthly possessions or money itself are evil. The Hebrew Old Testament as well as the Greek New Testament still considers the material world as God's work (Matt 25:27). It is good in the sense that God is the Creator and maintainer of this material world (Heb 1:2-3). However, it definitely does not mean that money should be worshipped as a god.

Wealth is good because we find such rich men in the Bible as Job (Job 1:3; 29:12-16), Abraham (Gen 13:6; 14:23), Moses (Heb 11:26), David (2 Sam 7:1-2; 2 Chr 18:8,11; 22:13,15), and Boas (Ruth 2:1) who all used their wealth to bless others to promote God's cause.

In the New Testament, the Wise Men from the East (Matt 2:11), the chief tax collector, Zacchaeus (Luke 19:8), Joseph of Arimathea (Matt 17:57), Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37), John Mark's mother (Acts 1:13-14), and Gaius (3 John 5) were all rich and good examples of proper stewardship of money. Not only was their money used by God to glorify Him and to benefit others, but it gave them real happiness, wealth, and meaning to their lives.

### Is Money Evil?

In contrast, however, we are also familiar with the following biblical stories: Balaam cursed his own people (Jude 11; Num 23-24); Judas betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ (John 12:6; Matt 26:15 ); Demas deviated from ministerial work and deserted Paul (2 Tim 4:10); Ananias and Sapphira lied against the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-11); and the rich young ruler refused Jesus' calling and went away sad (Matt 19:22). All these narratives tell us how money and property can be used by Satan to grieve God and hurt people. The misuse of wealth certainly can lead men and women into misery and ultimately to physical, moral, and spiritual death. In this sense, money may be considered to be evil.

The Bible says: "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction" (1 Tim 6:9). Does this mean then that money or richness itself is evil? The following text tells the reason for these sad consequences: "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Tim 6:10). The cause of such evil comes not from money or wealth itself, but because people so eagerly covet riches that they forsake their faith in God. It is difficult for these people to enter the kingdom of God because their wealth is on this earth, and where people's treasure is there their hearts will be also (see Matt 19:23; 6:21).

The Bible points out that "the deceitfulness of wealth" can choke spiritual



growth (Matt 13:22). How easily men are deceived by Satan through money. In this sense wealth becomes evil. But money does not have to be one's stumbling block. Humans sin because of their evil desires, and Satan's temptations (Jas 1:13-16) are not due to wealth itself. Money may become the tool in Satan's hand to lure people who crave richness, but he cannot force men to sin. Individuals sin by their own choice--they crave money above anything else.

### Neither Good nor Evil

What is the nature of money? Wealth or money itself is only a tool. It is neither bad nor good. Money can be used by God or Satan; it may become a test of love or a tool of temptation. It can be a positive channel of blessing or a negative way of curse. The difference depends on: (1) whether we realize God's ownership and our stewardship, (2) the means by which we get wealth (Prov 10:2; 13:11, 21:6; Jer 17:11) and the way we keep or spend the money, and (3) whether we treat money as a helpful servant or esteem it as our high-handed master, fascinating lover, or even a god.

Once we acknowledge God's ownership and are willing to be His faithful servant and steward, then, not only would we know how to master money which is entrusted to us, but know that wealth can bring us and many others happiness, health, and a meaningful life. However, if money dominates our whole life, we will become God's enemy. Finally, it can lead us into sorrow and incur physical and mental

diseases (Eccl 5:12), as well as moral and spiritual collapse.

### The Causes of Poverty and the Ways to Prosperity

Poverty and wealth are a related social phenomenon, and a kind of life experience. They are the result but not the cause. Based on the understandings of wealth which were discussed above, in this section I attempt to present the biblical answer to the causes of poverty and means to prosperity which are an integrated part of my proposed theme and biblical doctrine. Quite often when people become poor, they begin to blame God and man. Nowadays so many people seek wealth through improper ways.

Presently in China, there are many published guidebooks to acquiring riches. The best sellers are not scientific works, political books, or even literature, but are books on how to make money. On the other hand, there are numerous studies on poverty as presented by Marxists, socialists, and liberation theologians. We need to know what the Bible teaches on this important and timely topic. This section points out the causes of poverty and the proper ways to prosperity. Having understood these, we can learn how to avoid poverty as much as possible and how to obtain prosperity without remorse.

### Causes of Poverty

No doubt poverty was one of the results of the Fall. After Adam and Eve dishonored God and distrusted Him and ate the forbidden fruit, God announced the

curse. When the intimate relationship between God and humankind was broken, the harmonious relationship between men and nature also was damaged. Toilsome labor and poor harvests were expected (see Gen 3:17-19). After Cain killed his brother, the situation became worse as God predicted: "When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you" (Gen 4:12). Just like sin brought sorrow and death, so it also caused poverty. As we search the Bible, we discover some personal and social factors that cause poverty. First I present the personal factors.

#### Laziness

"Do not love sleep or you will grow poor; stay awake and you will have food to spare" (Prov 20:13; 6:9-11). One Chinese idiom has a similar warning: "Sit idle and eat, and in time your whole fortune will be used up." Laziness is one cause of poverty. The Bible not only points out the problem, but also gives good counsel on how to deal with laziness (Prov 6:6-8).

#### Loving pleasure and chasing fantasies

The wise man said: "He who loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and oil will never be rich" (Prov 21:17; 29:3). "He who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty" (Prov 28:19). Vainglory-seeking and sexual indulgence (Prov 29:3) also contribute to poverty (see 1 Tim 2:9; 1 Pet 3:3). An empty life is a poor life and one who lives for pleasure will become destitute.

### Lip-service

"All hard works brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty" (Prov 14:23). Meaningless talk or even mere talk often yields an empty heart and empty stomach. "Make the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil" (Eph 5:16). Instead of empty talk and useless discussion, people need to work in order to prosper. China at one time wasted much time on slogans and endless meetings.

### Selfishness

One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty" (Prov 11:24). No waste should be encouraged, but to be selfish and to squander are twins. This seems strange, but it is true. To spend lavishly on unnecessary things is just as bad as being stingy on necessary things. There were two trees in the center of Eden that looked alike, but they were totally different by their nature. Parsimony seems like thrift, but actually it leads to poverty; generosity leads to prosperity. Because we freely receive from God, we should freely give to others as they need. God will not bless the niggard. The Dead Sea cannot flow with fresh water like the Sea of Galilee.

### Ignoring discipline

"He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honored" (Prov 13:18). Poverty itself can be an exercise, a discipline, or a turning point in life. "Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they

cried out to the Lord for help" (Judg 6:6). The Chinese idiom says: "Only in destitution would men start to call upon heaven." If we can learn lessons from poverty itself, the situation often can be reversed. Experience is a tutor; history is a treasure.

### Know not God's way

"These are only the poor; they are foolish, for they do not know the way of the Lord, the requirement of God" (Jer 5:4). Knowing not God's way leads to deeper levels of poverty. A worldly millionaire could be a beggar in the presence of God. Knowing not God's way is also a fundamental factor of personal poverty, because knowing God is the beginning of wisdom. Taking His way should prevent us from going astray and wasting our life and money.

In addition to these personal factors, the Bible also indicates some social factors which should not be neglected.

### Socio-political and religious problems

The rich man oppressing the poor is obviously one major problem leading to a poor society. The Bible says: "He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth, and he who gives gifts to the rich--both come to poverty" (Prov 22:16). This is not an ordinary viewpoint, but a spiritual insight. God is a God of love and justice. He acts not according to our intentions but by His principles. No oppressor will ultimately be blessed in the real sense.

The prophets Amos and Micah especially denounced the rich and the priests who oppressed the poor, making their lives miserable (Mic 6:12; Amos 4:1). "Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land" (Amos 8:4, 6). In the New Testament, James told the rich employer: "Look! The wages you fail to pay the workmen who mow your fields are crying out against you" (Jas 5:4). Obviously this kind of oppression and exploitation of the needy causes the poor to become poorer and brings serious destitution.

The oppressed peasants and workers of China were organized and used by the Communist Party. They won their cause in China but as a result brought disasters to the landlords and bourgeoisie. Ironically, these people in China still spent their lives in poverty under Communism. Only the oppressor or exploiter was changed, not the poverty.

Corruption is another factor causing many countries to become poor (Isa 1:23). Even in Communist countries this is a serious problem. Since the fifties until now, in China campaign after campaign dealing with corruption has been launched, yet it still exists and has, in fact, become worse. Strife and war contribute to the destitution of people (Matt 24:7; Jas 4:2). China suffered from wars and struggles generation after generation. Only the last decade has been an exception.

Religious degradation also leads to poverty (Ezek 34; Jude 12). Social and religious injustice are not overlooked by God and His prophets (Isa 3:15; Matt 23:14). These personal factors--laziness, love of pleasure, empty talk, selfishness,

ignoring discipline, knowing not God's way, and socio-political injustice as well as religious degradation--all cause poverty. Being able to solve these problems will build a wealthy society, a prosperous church, and a rich person.

### The Way to Riches

The people in China pursue richness by all means. Beside the customary way, some people improperly acquire money through the lottery, gambling, swindling, or engaging in speculation and profiteering, and even stealing. The Bible suggests various suitable ways in which humanity can be wealthy.

### Work

Work is a very basic requirement to becoming rich. "If a man will not work, he shall not eat" (2 Thess 3:10). Even in Eden and the New Earth, suitable labor is assigned by God to men (Gen 2:15; Isa 65:21-22). The fourth commandment says: "Six days you shall labor and do all your work" (Exod 20:9). Work not only earns a living, it enriches a human being's life. After the Fall, it also became a prevention to vanity and degradation.

### Saving

In the wilderness as God gave manna to the Israelites, Moses said to them: "This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Each one is to gather as much as he needs'" (Exod 16:15-19). One of the principles here is not to waste. When the same Lord

was on this earth and preached in the wilderness, He fed five thousand people by a miracle. The Bible says: "When they had all had enough to eat, He said to His disciples, 'Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted'" (John 6:12). The same principle of "wasting not" was reinforced here. Squandering leads to poverty, and thrift yields wealth. As extravagance appears in many places, advocating frugality becomes urgent.

#### Investing wisely

The parable of the talents which Jesus told the people is the best illustration and clearest instruction for us to learn (Matt 25:14-30). The master would commend those who faithfully utilize what is entrusted to them, no matter how much or little. The master praised them with the same word: "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" (vs. 23). To the one who received one talent but did not use it, his master declared: "You wicked, lazy servant!" (vs. 26). The master said that the servant should at least have put his master's money on deposit with the bankers, so that when the master returned he would have received it back with interest. Using the money directly or indirectly is demanded for its increase. Wisely utilizing talents or money is one way to be rich. Hard work and wise investing has led Mr. G. S. Lee of Hong Kong to be the seventh richest man in the world.



## Trust in God

In the ultimate sense, "the Lord sends poverty and wealth" (1 Sam 2:7). But it is different from the traditional Chinese idea--wealth is by the mandate of heaven which is based on fatalism. Instead of putting hope in destiny and uncertain wealth, men should trust in the living and loving God, Who richly provides everything for our enjoyment (see 1 Tim 6:17).

Deut 8:18 reminded the ancient Israelites to remember God, the fountain of every blessing. Deut 8:12-14 mentions that men are so forgetful and ungrateful. Thus, trusting in God and praising and thanking Him are the most important secrets to acquiring wealth. "The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it" (Prov 10:22).

## Faithful in tithe

In acknowledging God's ownership and as a token of our thanks to His blessing, tithe is presented. God challenged and promised the faithful one:

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (Mal 3:10).

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees who hypocritically offered a tenth of the spices, but "neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness" (Matt 23:23a). Meanwhile, Jesus said: "You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former" (vs. 23b). In God's mathematics, nine tenths is much more

than ten tenths. Mr. Chan Shun, a rich Chinese of the SDA church, has generously donated to the church, schools, and institutions in many countries; he is a faithful tithe payer and God has richly blessed him and his business.

### Usefulness of Money and Its Limitation

Having discovered the nature of money in its positive sense, I want to challenge those who consider wealth as totally negative or those who feel money only serves their own needs. Here I first present the various uses of money.

#### Usefulness

##### Support of family

In addition to returning tithe and caring for personal needs, money that has been earned, saved, and increased should support the family's needs which includes honoring and helping our parents. Concerning this issue Jesus told the Pharisees and teachers of the law clearly that men should not nullify the Word of God for the sake of tradition (see Matt 15:4-6, Eph 6:1-3). Money should also be used in rearing children (Eph 6:4), and for taking care of the spouse (Eph 6:28-29) and extended family members. "If everyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim 5:8). In this regard we need to preserve the good Chinese heritage of supporting the family and providing for parents. Unfortunately, many young people now neglect it.

### Offer to God and His church

Our money should be used in supporting God's work through the church. In constructing the Tabernacle, the ancient Israelites left a very good example (Exod 35:4-29). Men and women all were willing to offer what they had to contribute to the temple construction. The wise man urged: "Honor the Lord with your wealth" (Prov 3:9). During the early apostolic times, one brilliant illustration was recorded in the Bible (Acts 4:32-37). At that time believers shared everything they had. Some very touching passages on offerings to God and His cause are the poor widow's two small pennies (Mark 12:41-43) and Mary Magdalene's expensive perfume in anointing Jesus before His crucifixion (Matt 26: 6-13; Mark 14:3). Corporately, the great sacrificial spirit of the supporters of the Macedonian churches (2 Cor 8:1-5) is also a wonderful testimony on how to deal with money. In China, scores of new church buildings in the countryside have been totally paid for by the farmers' sacrificial and liberal offerings.

### Care for the world family

In one sense, money carries a worldwide meaning. "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to the people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Gal 6:10). For instance, when a severe famine spread over the Roman world, "the disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers in Judea. This they did" (Acts 11:30).

Peter, John, Paul, and James all have left us much good advice. Peter said: "Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality" (2 Pet 1:7; also see 1 John 3:17; Rom 12:13; Jas 2:15-17). John claimed: "For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20). Paul, stretching out his hands to the elders of the Ephesian church, gave his testimony: "You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions" (Acts 20:34).

The parable of the sheep and goat (Matt 25: 31-46) which Jesus taught is full of this truth. Sharing and caring is the spirit of Christ. Money or wealth can be used for many good things such as almsgiving and may be extended to one's own small family, the church, God's household, and even the world at large. By doing these good things, we "have treasure in heaven" (Luke 18:22).

On the other hand, we cannot ignore the other side of the truth--money is far from all-powerful as some people believe; it has quite a few limitations.

### The Limitations of Money

In this world many people worship the god of wealth. To them money seems omnipotent. On the contrary, rich men who do not have God in their heart often cannot go to sleep (Eccl 5:12). They are the targets of kidnapping (Prov 13:8). Their hearts are locked in where their treasures are (Matt 6:21). They have no freedom. Wealth like poverty causes separation among people (Mic 6:12; Gen 13:6).

Dividing the family inheritance in many cases has resulted in tragedy. A more serious consequence is that the rich are easily tempted to sin against God. By their pride, or excessive luxuries, they hurt their relationship with Him (Jas 4:3-4; Rev 3:17; Ezek 33:31). Besides these evil results of craving money, money itself has some intrinsic limitations.

Money cannot gain life. Jesus said: "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt 16:26). In Jesus' parable of the rich fool, God said to this foolish man: "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" (Luke 12:20).

Anyone who stores up money for himself is not rich toward God. So Jesus admonished: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). Money also cannot redeem the life of another, that he should live on forever and see no decay (Ps 49:7-9).

Money cannot be exchanged for love. "Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it will be utterly scorned" (Cant 8:7-8). Money may earn the loveless "love" but certainly not the real love.

Money cannot purchase peace or happiness. "Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro: He bustles about, but only in vain: he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it" (Ps 39:6). Not by wealth or power but only "to renounce . . . sins by doing what is right . . . and being kind to the oppressed" would peace ensue (see also Dan 4:27). The experience of Zacchaeus, a wealthy, chief tax collector, fully proved this (Luke 19:1-10). So Jesus told His disciples: "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives" (John 14:27). "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed" (Isa 53:5). If peace, love, and a soul have been totally missed in one's life, what will be left? So only "the blessing of the Lord brings wealth, and He adds no trouble to it" (Prov 10:22).

### Christ Makes Us Rich

The Bible records many instances of how Jesus encountered rich men and worked for their salvation. On certain occasions, He gave lessons on the issues of wealth and poverty or taught it in parables. It seems money, especially real wealth, is not a small issue with God because it affects people's daily lives and their eternal salvation.

We have learned earlier that money can undoubtedly be very useful, but money obviously has its limitations. However, thank God for Jesus Christ. What

money cannot do, Christ did for us all. He redeemed our soul, bestowed His love, and enriched our lives. This is the first thing I want to present in this section. Then we can see how, in the milieu of this last generation, and the current trend of thought in China, by Christ's grace, we can be rich men/women. Even though the love of money has a corrosive influence on the human heart, on Chinese society, and even on the church, we still can be rich in faith, hope, and love as well as in spiritual power. Let us see Christ's work for us.

#### Redeems our soul

As Peter said: "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers" (1 Pet 1:18). The Psalmist also tells us that to "those who trust in their wealth . . . no man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him--the ransom for him is costly, no payment is ever enough--that he should live on forever and not to see decay" (Ps 49:6-9). However, "but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect," men are redeemed (1 Pet 1:19). So Paul said: "You are not your own. You were bought with a price" (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23). Money cannot be exchanged for life or redeem anyone from eternal loss, but Jesus took our death and gave His life. Thus, "whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). He has paid our ransom which no one, even a billionaire, can pay. He won our soul on the cross of Calvary.

### Bestows His love

As no amount of money can earn true love, Jesus for love's sake gave us His whole life and whole love, as Paul said:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But Christ demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:6-8).

### Enriches our lives

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). What kind of grace and what kind of exchange is this! In Him we have peace, joy, hope, richness, and a meaningful life--in fact, every blessing. "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority" (Col 2:9-10).

Furthermore, Jesus assured us that anyone "who has left houses or brothers and sisters for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life" (Matt 19:29). In Christ, all are as a new creation, and he or she enters a new epoch of life. Christ's followers, whether they are rich or poor in the material sense, are rich in Christ and His plan of salvation. "In Him you have been enriched in every way" (1 Cor 1:5). So "this is what the Lord says: Let not the wise man boast



of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me" (Jer 9:23-24).

### The True Rich Person

In this last generation what we see is exactly what the Bible has prophesied. People are craving to be rich, regardless of the result. Those who have lived in socialist or Communist countries were told that only those living in the capitalist countries were money worshipers. Now, after the myth of Communism has been exposed, these people suddenly realize all "crows are black" no matter where they are. "Lovers of money" is the second in Paul's long list of signs of these last perilous days (2 Tim 3:1-2). Meanwhile, confrontation is taking place between the unjust rich and the oppressed poor people in these last days. Even the church is self-reliant on its wealth, but is spiritually poor as stated in Rev 3:14-22. In fact, in church history as well as in reality, it is just as Paul said:

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are (1 Cor 1:26-28).

Even Jesus when He was on this planet said: "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head" (Luke 9:58). He was born in a manger and died on a cross. His only clothes were taken by others. By

human standards and in the material sense, many Christians like Jesus their Master are considered poor.

But we find in the Bible that there are so many texts indicating that God loves and cares for the poor and oppressed.<sup>1</sup> God hears their prayers, and defends them. God wants His people to take care of the needy, and the gospel is especially to be preached to them (Luke 4:18). God chose "those who are the poor in the eyes of the world" (Jas 2:5). While the majority of true Christians are not considered rich in the material sense, by Christ's merit they still can be the truly rich people.

#### Rich in faith and hope

Christians who are poor in material things can become rich in faith by God's grace (Jas 2:5). As God said to the church of Smyrna: "I know your afflictions and poverty--yet you are rich" (Rev 2:9). May the "God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15:13).

#### Rich in love

Even wealthy Christians need to ask how to be rich in good deeds and charity.

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<sup>1</sup>Isa 25:4; 3:5; Pss 13:7; 72:13; 9:18; 69:33; 102:17; Exod 22:25; Deut 24:12.

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is true life" (1 Tim 6:17-19).

This instructs us to be Christians who are rich in love. "Your love may abound more and more" (Phil 1:9). "The gold refined in the fire" (Rev 3:18)--"faith expressed . . . through love" (Gal 5:6) and through trial (1 Pet 1:7) is the true wealth.

#### Rich in spiritual power

Peter healed the crippled beggar after Pentecost. This man, crippled from his birth, was being carried to the temple. He begged everyday. One day he saw Peter and John entering, and asked them for money. At first he expected to get something from them, but Peter looked at him and said: "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (Acts 3:6). What was the result? As Peter was "taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk" (see Acts 3:7,8). His disability was gone and thus his poverty was also eliminated. Peter did not have money, but he was rich in spiritual power. Christians also can have this power.

### Rich in many things

It is possible, by God's grace and His will, that Christians can be "enriched in every way" including in "speaking and knowledge" (1 Cor 1:5) and possess the wealth of spiritual experiences. "God gives the Spirit without limit" (John 3:34). Wealth is only one of His gifts, whereas the Spirit is the Lord of all gifts. Christians can be like Paul, "known yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (2 Cor 6:9-10). Christians can also reassure themselves with David's words: "Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life" (Ps 23:6).

### Summary

The issue of wealth and poverty is an ancient as well as a modern problem. In viewing the current Chinese society,<sup>1</sup> church, and human heart, this has become a serious issue for Christians, and it is imperative for us to learn important lessons from the Bible. As an example of the doctrinal lesson which related to the theme "The Way That Leads to True Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity," this chapter dealt with the issue from the biblical viewpoint of money and our correct relation to wealth.

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<sup>1</sup>According to Wu Ro-Zeng, China Times Weekly, 1 May 1993, the moral standard and spiritual prop of the Chinese people are almost on the brink of collapse. The most dangerous thing in China is not that everyone talks about money, thinks of money, or wants to earn great wealth, it even is not imitations and fraud, but it is that money has become the only standard in people's value system.

According to the Bible:

1. Wealth or money is a gift from God. He has the ownership while men are His stewards.

2. Wealth or money itself comes from the Fountain of every blessing--the Creator God. Thus it should not be condemned as bad or evil. However, it is not inherently good either.

3. Money in people's hands can be used by God or Satan. Where money comes from is relevant, and how to spend it is important also.

4. After the Fall, many factors cause poverty, including personal and social problems. But God loves and cares for the innocent poor and hates the oppressor.

5. Such elements as work, thrift, wise utilization, trusting in God, and paying tithe faithfully contribute to people's wealth.

6. Wealth, after being used for our personal needs, should be utilized in helping our family members, supporting God's household, and caring for our world family.

7. Money should not be looked upon as a god, lover, or master. We must realize that wealth has its own limitations. Money cannot be exchanged for life, earn true love, or purchase peace and happiness.

8. What money cannot do, Christ did for us all. He forsook His own advantages and took our sorrow, poverty, and death. In Christ, everyone who

believes in Him can enjoy happiness, wealth, and a meaningful long life.

9. In this last generation, men have become lovers of money, and struggles take place between the rich and the poor. Even the church boasts of its worldly wealth, but it actually is spiritually poor. God wants His people whether rich or poor to be rich in faith, love, and spiritual power. In Christ, Christians eventually can be enriched in every way. We should seek after this instead of craving "uncertain money." It is much better to trust in the Lord of gifts rather than to put hope in any kind of gift, including money itself. As the negative effects of capitalism and the wrong concepts on wealth grip the soul of the Chinese people and are tempting Christians there, the biblical light shed on the money issue is greatly needed. Thank God for all His precious instructions and the grace that we can become true rich men/women in Christ.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This doctrinal training project is targeted to the urgent need of Chinese church workers as well as the lay people and thus provides one helpful solution. This chapter gives a brief summary and some recommendations for further application.

#### Summary

According to the given requirement, there are two parts to this paper. The first part is the background and research base of this project. The second part is the practical application for the project. Each part has three chapters.

Chapter 1 is a survey of literature. It is not a complete investigation but only touches on selected materials on contextualized theology, Chinese religions, the Christian church, and radio ministry which have helped my project and will provide assistance for further study. Generally, English materials are available, but there is a great need of Chinese materials. Those areas especially lacking are books on contextualized doctrine, Chinese church history (including SDA church history after 1949), and research on Chinese radio ministry. China needs the gospel of Christ. The Chinese church should preach the contextualized Bible truth by all means

available such as radio broadcasts, the publishing work, and by doctrinal training classes.

Chapter 2 presented the biblical basis and E. G. White's perspective on this doctrinal training program. A theoretical support was found on mission, cross-cultural ministry, mass media, and lay doctrinal training from the Bible and E. G. White's writings. I am encouraged to do mission work in China with these precious instructions presented within the current Chinese setting.

Chapter 3 provided a proposed theme for the biblical doctrines: The Way That Leads to True Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity. Many suggested themes for Christian theology and the Bible have disadvantages in their application to China and the Chinese people. However, the familiar "Happiness, Wealth, Longevity" motif fits the classic Chinese cultural heritage as well as pursuits of the modern people. This proposed theme is Christ-centered and relates material blessings to spiritual blessings, the present life to eternal life, and the Chinese thought forms with biblical concepts.

Chapter 4 presented my understanding of the general and SDA arrangement (as well as my reasons for adjusting the sequence) of the main doctrinal sections. It then introduced how to relate the proposed "Happiness, Wealth, and Longevity" motif to biblical doctrines in which most of the SDA fundamental beliefs were briefly discussed. It is interesting and exciting to find coherence between this indigenous motif and biblical doctrines.

Chapter 5 under the section of "Doctrine of Christian Life" dealt with



people and God's law. The reason for using this as a sample of doctrinal-training material is that China as a whole, the Chinese church, and the Chinese SDA church urgently need to know God's law and how to apply it correctly. Concerning God's law, four categories of improper ways--ignorance, lawbreaking, antinomianism, and legalism--were discussed with their remedies and the right attitudes to God's law--to know, trust and obey, and love. Finally, several valuable institutions--the NEW START lifestyle, a sound family and marriage system, and the seventh-day Sabbath, which not only were ordained in Eden before Adam and Eve's fall but also relate to God's natural law, the civic law, and the moral law--were presented.

Chapter 6 was devoted to another important topic--stewardship of money--which is still under the section of doctrine of Christian life. (The Chinese religious approach often tends to study concrete and practical issues rather than theoretical or philosophical arguments.) "Making money" and "getting rich" once were criticized but have become the most attractive topic among most Chinese people, including Christians. Meanwhile it is a source of great temptation and serious delusion. Thus under the premise of God's ownership and our stewardship, (1) the biblical understanding on the nature of money, (2) certain causes of wealth and poverty, (3) the usefulness and limitations of money, and (4) how to become a truly rich people in faith, hope, and love by Christ' sacrifice on the cross and aspiration of His life were presented.

In light of China and the Chinese church's situation, this doctrinal training

program emerged. To lead non-Christians from the known to the unknown, from secular to sacred things, from the materialistic to spiritual blessings, and from earth to heaven is the intent of my project.

Even though this is not an exhaustive study but only a preliminary work, I believe that the application of this motif to our fundamental doctrines will help our work and lead many Chinese people to Christ--"The Way and the Truth and the Life."

### Recommendations

In addition to the training study group or seminar on doctrines which can be conducted right now in many places in China, the following recommendations are expected to be carried out in the near future.

1. Use the ideas and contents from this paper and change the format and language to produce a new series of audio (or video) programs on Christian fundamental beliefs. Broadcast them to China by our AWR/Asia station.
2. Adopt the concept and contents to write a new set of Bible correspondence courses. (The old ones have been used for almost half a century.)
3. Take this as an introductory experiment to develop a longer term of advanced ministerial training, in the event China opens its doors wider and full liberty of religion is gained.
4. This study can be considered as a preliminary work; therefore a

comprehensive book will be published based on doing further studies (the Chinese SDA church greatly lacks contextualized theology books). By God's grace this project must help the Chinese church and people.

May God send His Holy Spirit and bless His work for His glory and the salvation of the Chinese people.

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